

#236

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Dragon® MAGAZINE

Fiction by
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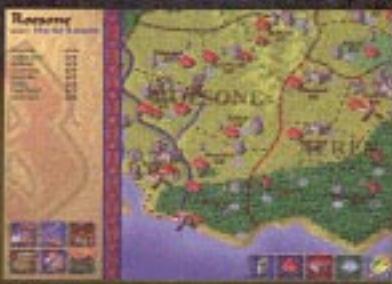


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S I E R R A





Wesley Bagnall



The dying game

My first PC was a fighter named Random. I had just read Roger Zelazny's *Nine Princes in Amber* and thought that Random was a hipper name than Corwin, even though the latter was clearly *the man*. He lasted exactly one encounter. Orcs.

My second PC was a thief named Roulette, which I thought was a clever name. Roulette enjoyed a longer career: roughly one session. Near the end, after suffering through Roulette's determined efforts to search every 10'-square of floor, wall, and ceiling in the dungeon, Jeff the DM decided on a whim that the wall my thief had just searched was, in fact, coated with contact poison. I rolled a three to save.

Thus ensued my first player-DM argument. There wasn't supposed to be contact poison on that wall, and I knew it. But there was no going back; Roulette was dead, and I'd just have to roll up another PC. After just a few scenes, I was back into the game and loving it, arguing with another player over the mule his PC insisted on bringing into the dungeon.

Jeff's older brother Mike was also a DM. He had created his own world, complete with detailed maps he'd carefully drawn and colored. He even slipped them into plastic folders to guard against our teenaged rowdiness. We thwarted him, though. Within a week, Jeff and I tumbled across the gaming table, struggling over a plastic sword, and spoiled the gorgeous campaign map with spilled lemonade.

Despite the ill omen, we started Mike's campaign that Friday afternoon, traveling from blurred city to smeared dungeon with the usual plan: to kill the monsters and take their stuff. Soon we realized that this campaign was deadly. After the first hour, three of us were rolling new PCs to replace our casualties. Before the end of the night, we'd lost almost a dozen characters among us. I'd named my latest fighter Uther, since I'd been reading Mary Stewart.

"I told you this was tough," said Mike. We took it as a challenge, so back we went the next day.

"Here," I said, pointing at a place labeled, cleverly enough, 'The Dungeon of Death.' "There's got to be some great magic in here." The other players needed a little persuading, but Mike had been stingy (we thought) on magical items.

"There is some great stuff in there," said Mike. "But it's far too dangerous for you. You can go there if you want, though."

"Let's go!" we cried as one.

Mike held up the map for us to see, though Jeff and I weren't allowed to touch it. The first room had maybe ten doors in it. One portal looked especially inviting, with multi-colored veils drawn before an archway. I pointed, and the others agreed.

"Are you sure you want to go there?" asked Mike.

"Yeah. I want a vorpal sword," I said greedily.

"It's the most dangerous place in the dungeon," he warned.

"I'll wait and see what happens to him," said Jeff. The coward.

"C'mon, guys! If we work together, we can make it." I really wanted a vorpal sword. One by one they demurred, until I declared I'd go by myself and keep all the treasure I found.

"You go in?" asked Mike.

"You bet."

"OK. You're dead. Roll up a new character."

"What! What killed me?"

"I can't tell you. You might want to go in again, and your new character wouldn't know what's in there."

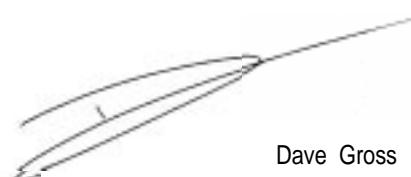
The jerk! I rolled up another fighter, since that was easier than picking spells or working out thief percentages. I named him Uther II in wary defiance. We chose a less threatening passage and entered as a group. Thirty feet in, the floors opened up, and giant gears ground my PC to hamburger. Uther III.

That one blew up while opening a treasure chest. Uther IV sank into the swamp. Uther V. That one burned to the ground and sank into the swamp. Uther VI, Uther VII, Uther VIII . . .

Mind flayers, pools of acid, a beholder, scythe traps, a trio of gorgons, crushing walls . . . you name it, it killed my Uthers.

That weekend did wonders for me, now that I think it over. Never since have I had a tantrum after a character — even a favorite one — died during a game. I'd just pick up my trusty sixers and roll a new one. In a way, Mike did me a big favor.

Either that, or he was still really hacked about that wet map.



Dave Gross

Issue #236 Vol. XXI, No. 7

December 1996

DRAGON

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TSR, Inc.

Associate Publisher
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December 1996
Volume XXI, No. 7
Issue #236

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with these new Skills & Powers.*

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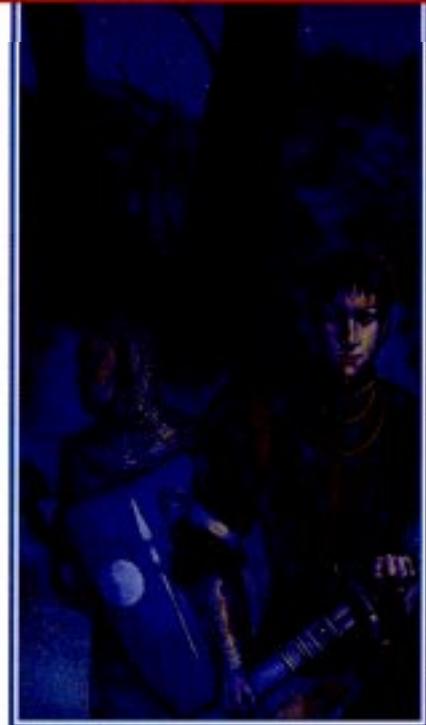
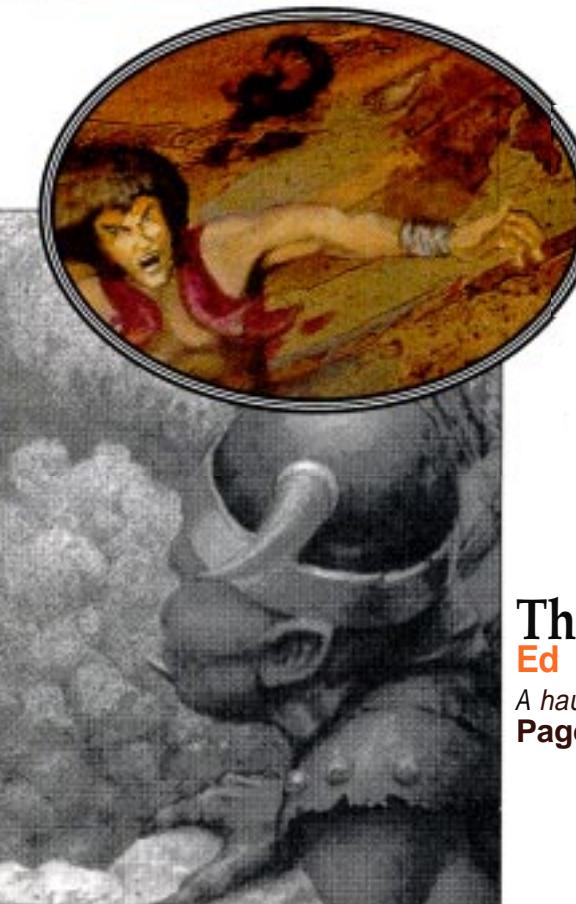
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Dear *DRAGON Magazine*,

A few likes and dislikes about *DRAGON Magazine* issue #234. First, the articles. "Wyrms of the North" by Ed Greenwood was excellent. I've really enjoyed this series, and the "Draconomicon" article complemented it perfectly. I liked some of the items in "Nocturnal Crusade," and they may make an appearance in my campaign. The "Crypt Rangers and Defenders" seemed more useful for NPCs than for PCs — I can't imagine a group of players sitting down and saying "We want to guard a graveyard!" The *RAVENLOFT®* and Athas-specific articles are pretty much useless to me, as I don't use those settings.

The regular columns were good, especially "Knights of the Dinner Table"

DRAGON® Magazine (ISSN 0279-6848) is published monthly except November (twice monthly) by TSR, Inc., 201 Sheridan Springs Road, Lake Geneva, WI 53147, United States of America. The postal address for all materials from the United States of America and Canada except subscription orders is *DRAGON® Magazine*, 201 Sheridan Springs Road, Lake Geneva, WI 53147, U.S.A.; telephone (414) 248-3625; fax (414) 248-0389. The postal address for materials from Europe is: *DRAGON Magazine*, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom; telephone (0223) 212517 (U.K.), 44-223-212517 (international); telex: 818761, fax (0223) 248066 (U.K.), 414-223-238066 (international).

Distribution: *DRAGON Magazine* is available from game and hobby shops throughout the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and through a limited number of other overseas outlets. Distribution to the book trade in the United States is by Random House, Inc., and in Canada

and "Dragonmirth." The reviews were useful, especially for *Night Below* and *Undermountain: The Lost Level*. However, both of those products have been out for a while. It would be helpful if the review and the product came out closer together.

What I'd like to see: First, more *GREYHAWK®* material, either in *DRAGON Magazine* or in new products. This world, more than any other, is AD&D. Second, what happened to the NPC column? Did it just skip a month? Finally, I buy *DRAGON Magazine* off the stands, and I'd like to be able to see what I'm buying ahead of time — I don't like the shrink wrap!

That's it for now. Keep up the good work!

Phil Rhodes
Waco, TX

*Take a peek at the **DRAGON Magazine** Annual (if you haven't already) for a short but interesting addition to the **GREYHAWK** setting. More articles on that classic campaign world are in the works, and the next could appear as early as our March issue.*

"Rogue's Gallery" also appears in the Annual, though there's another slated for an upcoming issue. We have so many departments — including "Bazaar of the Bizarre," "Arcane Lore," "Wyrms of the North," and others — that it's impossible to run all of them on a monthly basis. Thus, you'll see each appearing on a rotating basis, depending on when we receive articles appropriate for the department.

As for the polybags, we're doing our best to let you know what's in each issue with cover blurbs and our "Coming Next Issue" box near the end of the magazine. The polybags are needed to let us include inserts with the magazine.

Dear *DRAGON Magazine*,

I've been reading your magazine for about six months and love it! I've been reading fantasy books such as the *DRAGONLANCE®* chronicles, books by David Eddings and J.R.R. Tolkien, the Magic series, and so on. I've been reading these since I was about ten or eleven (I'm thirteen now).

by Random House of Canada, Ltd. Distribution to the book trade in the United Kingdom is by TSR Ltd. Send orders to Random House, Inc., Order Entry Department, Westminster MD 21157, U.S.A.; telephone: (800) 733-3000. Newsstand distribution throughout the United Kingdom is by Comag Magazine Marketing, Tavistock Road, West Drayton, Middlesex UB7 7QE, United Kingdom; telephone 0895-444055.

Subscription: Subscription rates via periodical-class mail are as follows: \$42 in U.S. funds for 13 issues sent to an address in the U.S.; \$49 in U.S. funds for 13 issues sent to an address in Canada; \$36 for 13 issues sent to an address within the United Kingdom; \$49 for 13 issues sent to an address in Europe; \$65 in U.S. funds for 13 issues sent by surface mail to any other address, or \$119 in U.S. funds for 13 issues sent air mail to any other address. Payment in full must accompany all subscription orders. Methods of payment include checks or money orders

To get to the point, those books have inspired me to write my own fantasy books. So far I'm on my first book, and I don't know how many more are to be expected. (I don't even have a title for the book yet.) I'm not even sure how far I am on my first book; it seems to make itself up along the way! I'm writing you because I've no idea where else to start. If you could *please* give me some advice about getting my book(s) Illustrated, published, sold, etc. I'd be very grateful.

If you'd like to have a copy of my "book" (however far I am at the time), just call, write, etc. I'd love to have your opinion.

I'd be happy just with the info that you can get to me without any trouble.

Alan Scott Clover
Cincinnati, OH

Rare is the fan of fantasy fiction who hasn't at some time had the desire to write a book or series. We often receive letters or manuscripts with requests that we read and comment upon a first novel. Unfortunately, we can't possibly do so. (So please don't send them!) The best advice is still the simplest: Write, write often, and rewrite. Find some friends willing to read and criticize your work, and then respond to their criticism with changes rather than explanations as often as possible.

*Even after you have a completed manuscript, it's hard to find someone who will read it unless you have already published fiction. It seems like a Catch-22 situation, but there's a solution: Try publishing some short fiction first. **DRAGON Magazine** is only one good place for a first-time writer to publish short stories.*

Dear *DRAGON Magazine*,

I am a soldier stationed overseas and therefore am not able to drive down to my local book store to purchase my RPG game, accessories, and magazines. I am very thankful for my subscription to *DRAGON Magazine*. I receive my monthly issue directly to my P.O. Box, and my friends fight over it because the same issue won't hit the local "post" book store until one or two months later. The arti-

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cles are great, informative, humorous, and all-around fun. I am especially grateful for the "TSR Previews" in the back of the magazine. Along with the description of the product, you include the ISBN number. If my book store does not have the item, I can special order it with the ISBN number. That way I can keep up on the new products. If I have nothing else to look forward to every month (as the Army is always unpredictable) I am glad I have my *DRAGON Magazine*.

Sgt. Peter J. Weintraub
Europe

Dear *DRAGON Magazine*,

I just wanted to comment on the **DRAGONLANCE®: FIFTH AGE™** game. I picked it up two weeks ago and was bowled over. I had high hopes, but it exceeded them. The **SAGA™** system is elegant, easy to understand, and great fun to play. The designers deserve high praise indeed.

I had given up on TSR bringing their worlds and rule system up to date and applaud them on redefining the standard of this industry once again. While I'm sure slavering praise is appreciated, I do have a serious concern. *Please support SAGA!* In the past, many non-AD&D® games have fallen quickly, it seems, because they couldn't match up to AD&D sales. I hope this doesn't happen to **SAGA** or to the **DRAGONLANCE** setting.

As a matter of fact, I want to cast my vote for more AD&D worlds to be converted to **SAGA**, at least optionally. I can see it now: all TSR game books including both AD&D and **SAGA** rules, especially for the **RAVENLOFT** and **PLANESCAPE®** settings. **SAGA** is perfect as a universal system, especially a super hero game (preferably set in either the DC or the Marvel universe). Thank you for turning an old fan into a new one, and for recreating that feeling I first had when I bought my first role-playing game.

Mark Craddock
via e-mail

Funny you should ask about the **SAGA** system and using it for other settings, Mark. You should be pleased with several upcoming arti-

cles supporting that line, starting next issue. Soon after, **DUNGEON® Adventures** will feature a scenario for the **SAGA** system, with rules for converting it to AD&D rules. While the AD&D game and settings remain the focus of both magazines, there'll be plenty of support for the **SAGA** system as well. Check out this month's "Sage Advice" column for some of the first questions about the **SAGA** rules.

Dear *DRAGON Magazine*,

As a DM of eight years (almost), I would like to extend my gratitude for the "Lich Magical Items" I found in Issue #234. I'm sure my players will like them, too. Anyway, your magazine has offered inspiration to me and a lot of people I know and we all hope you will keep doing so in the future. Keep up the good work!

Jesse Sherman
via e-mail

Dear *DRAGON Magazine*,

I am dismayed that TSR no longer publishes **AL-QADIM®** products. I'm sure that most AD&D players agree with me that it is one of the best campaigns ever made. So, unpopularity can't be the reason for discarding this marvelous world. In any case, it's much better and more original than, say, the **DRAGONLANCE** world.

While we are at it, I have noticed that there were no **MYSTARA®** products in 1996. Does that mean that the same fate will befall **MYSTARA** as did **AL-QADIM** and **GREYHAWK** settings?

Aleksei Andrievski
Alakiventie 7 E 100
00920 Helsinki
Finland

While **DRAGON Magazine** and **DUNGEON Adventures** continue to support **AL-QADIM** (check out the past year's articles and adventures) the line continues to live. Likewise with the **MYSTARA** and **GREYHAWK** settings, both of which have a home in these pages (and online). Keep an eye on the next few issues for more from all three of these settings.

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On the Cover

This month we're featuring yet another of our collaboration covers. This one is notable in that it is the first time the formidable Jeff Easley has ever shared a canvas with another artist. When Tony (Szczudlo) first proposed the idea to me I thought it was just idle talk. While the prospect seemed intriguing, I couldn't believe that two of our staff artists could get their schedules aligned to the degree necessary for such an endeavor. Yet, align they did, and the results are masterful! It's easy to see which artist had a hand in what parts of the painting due to the artists' strong individual styles. But the styles compliment each other and the composition makes the whole piece work as a single unit. Kudos to them both!!

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Periodical-class postage paid at Lake Geneva, Wis., U.S.A., and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *DRAGON Magazine*, TSR, Inc., 201 Sheridan Springs Road, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. USPS 318-790, ISSN 0279-6848.



Heroes of Faith

Skills & Powers for specialty priests

by Brian Linville

illustrated by Christina Wald

Even a fantasy world can be a chaotic and terrible place at times. Few things make sense, and the most improbable events can happen. Luckily there are great beings that guide mere mortals through such uncertain times. Those that devote their lives to such gods are priests. As followers of their deity, they are expected to spread the word and fight the enemies of their faith. The chosen few of such devoted followers are called specialty priests. These figures are blessed with the most powerful of gifts that their deities have to offer.

Specialty priests are different from common clerics. They are the living embodiment of their god, serving as mortal symbols of everything their deity represents. Typically, ten percent of any clergy are specialty priests, though in some cases a god may have no clerics at all, only specialty priests. What makes these characters so unique among PCs in AD&D® worlds are their special abilities.

Here is a list of new abilities for constructing specialty priests under the *PLAYER'S OPTION™: Skills & Powers* rules. Priests of nearly every mythos can be created with the addition of these abilities, though DMs are encouraged to add additional powers to customize the priesthoods of their own campaigns. One of the most important things to keep in mind when choosing abilities for a specialty priest is that all powers selected must make sense together and in relation to the specialty priest's patron deity. A god of pacifism, for instance, is unlikely to grant the battle rage power to his followers, despite its obvious benefits to an adventuring party. Note that the following rules should not be used for priests of the *DARK SUN®* setting. For information on using *Skills & Powers* rules *DARK SUN* PCs, see "Heroes of Athas" in the 1996 *DRAGON® Magazine* Annual.

Specialty priest abilities

Like a cleric, a specialty priest receives 125 character points to spend on skills and abilities from the *PLAYER'S OPTION: Spells & Powers* book and the list presented here. See Table 1 for a combined list of the abilities available to specialty priests.

Backstab (15): Priests of murder can learn to strike foes from behind, as does a thief. If a priest attacks from the back with surprise, he receives +4 to hit and inflicts damage as if he were a thief of the same level. The priest may not wear armor heavier than chain mail while backstabbing and can do so with any one handed melee weapon allowed to him.

Battle rage (15): Some priests of war can inspire their companions to fight more fiercely. A priest with such an ability can grant a +2 to hit and damage to all allies in a 60' radius. The priest may perform no other action during this time, and the ability takes one round to invoke. The bonus lasts for two rounds per level of the priest and can be used once per day. Note, this bonus is not cumulative with the *bless*, *chant*, or *prayer* spells.

Calming aura (20): Priests with this ability can *remove fear* with their touch as per spell. By their mere presence, these priests can alter the moods of those around them, causing all hostile creatures within 15' to make a successful saving throw vs. spells each round or become non hostile. Undead are immune to this effect. This power does not function if the priest himself is performing hostile actions. Both aspects of this power function continuously, as long as the priest is conscious.

Cure/cause disease (15): This is identical to the paladin ability and may be performed once a week per every five levels. Evil priests use the reverse of this ability.

Dead zone/wild zone immunity (15): The priest's spells can never go wild nor be affected by dead magic zones. This power does not allow a priest to cast spells if he is somehow cut off from his god, however.

Divine recognition (15): A priest with this power can identify the name and history of an object, person, or event relevant to his field of worship. For every level up to 5th, the priest's chance are 10% per level. From 6th to 10th, an addition 5% per level is added, and from 11th level on, an extra 3% per level is added. This power may be used as often as the priest wishes, but it requires a full round. Only one attempt may be made per target, however. Once the priest gains a level, he may make another attempt on a target if he failed the first time.

A priest of war, for example, could identify the number and training of an opposing army within his sight. A priest who worships art can determine the value of a painting and the talent of the artist. Magic-worshiping priests can identify an item's general function. A priest of truth/justice can tell if a person is lying or cheating.

Elemental immunity (20): This power enables the priest to be unaffected by natural forms of a certain element for one round per level of the priest per day. Such elements could be fire, lightning, cold, or acid. This ability also grants automatic saves against the magical versions of these elements. If no save is allowed



against these magical versions, this power has no effect.

Gift of life (25): At fifth level, a priest with this power may *resurrect* an individual who has died not later than a round ago. The *resurrection* attempt, if successfully survived, bestows full hit points, and the revived character does not lose a point of Constitution. (The resurrection still counts against the number of times that the character may be *resurrected*.) Such a gift is not without its price: The priest permanently loses one hit point each time this power is used.

Hide in shadows (5/10): The specialty priest can hide in shadows, as the ranger ability, in natural surroundings. See Table 22 in the ranger section of *Skills & Powers* for the chance of success. With the 10-point option, the priest can hide in shadows even in an urban environment.

Immunities (5/15): Priests with this ability are especially resistant to damage from a single sphere of magic (invocation, necromantic, etc.) The 5-point ability grants a +2 to any saving throw, if allowed, where the 15-point ability bestows automatic saving throw success.

Inspire fear (10): Priests who worship death can inspire fear in others. For every two levels, a priest with this ability can cast the fear spell once a day.

Languages (10): Any priest of trade or travel will more than likely have to learn many languages. This ability allows a priest to gain one additional proficiency per level after third, to be spent on languages only. The priest must still take the time to learn them as any other language.

Lay on hands (10): Just as a paladin, a good or neutral priest may heal two hp on himself or another creature once per day. An evil priest with this ability can inflict two hp damage per level once per day with the touch of his hands. There is no save against the draining effect.

Move Silently (5/10): The specialty priest can move silently, as the ranger ability, in natural surroundings. See Table 22 in the ranger section of *Skills & Powers* for the chance of success. With the 10-point option, the priest can hide in shadows even in an urban environment.

Turn lycanthrope (10): Few priests are granted this ability. It allows a priest to turn any werebeast, whether natural or cursed, if they are in their non human form at the beast's hit dice. For the result, the werecreature is knocked

unconscious for 1-6 turns. Like turning undead, this power is less effective in RAVENLOFT® setting campaigns.

Turn undead (10/15): The priest is granted power over undead, such as zombies, skeletons, vampires, and liches. Priests can drive away these creatures, and as priests advance in faith and experience levels, they can destroy some forms of undead. The 15-point ability is for priests with a greater understanding of undead, such as death priests have. They can turn undead as if they were three levels higher. See the turning undead table in the *PLAYER'S OPTION: Skills & Powers* rulebook.

Ultra vision (10): Any priest who worships a god of light, darkness, or insight may be granted ultra vision. This special sight allows the devoted follower to see in darkness as if it were day. Note, unlike ultra violet vision, ultra vision allows sight even deep underground, but this power does not penetrate magical darkness.

Optional restrictions

Specialty priests can gain bonus character points to spend on the above abilities by accepting voluntary restrictions to their abilities.

Codes of ethics (5 per code up to 20): Some gods impose certain restrictions upon their followers. Some restrictions may include not being able to marry, not being allowed to fight members of the opposite sex (this one may not be taken if the PC already a pacifist), not being able to consume certain common foods like meat or alcohol, having to keep one's head shaved or to wear certain strange dress, or not being able to speak after sundown, except to cast spells.

Limited armor (5/10/15): A priest with this restriction has more limited armor selection than normal. Being limited to chain mail or lighter gives the priest 5 CPs, where studded leather or lighter, gives him 10 CPs. No armor at all is worth 15 CPs. If the priest can't use a shield, it is worth an additional 5 CPs.

Limited magical item use (5+): Some deities deny the use of some magic items to their priests. For each category that is barred, the priest gains 5 CPs. The categories are: potions and oils; scrolls; rings and other miscellaneous items; rods, staves, and wands; and weapons and armor.

Pacifist (15): A pacifist may never strike a blow against any intelligent creature or risk angering his god. Such a priest is not always against others who

Table 3: Specialty priest abilities

In addition to the new powers presented here, specialty priests may choose cleric (C) and druid (D) abilities from the *Skills & Powers* rule book.

Ability	Source*
Access to sphere (3-15)	C/D
Backstab (15)	S
Battle rage (15)	S
Bonus spell (5)	D
Calm ing auras (20)	S
Casting reduction (5)	C
Cold resistance (5)	D
Communicate with creatures (10)	D
Cure/cause disease (15)	S
Dead zone/wild zone immunity (15)	C
Detect evil (10)	C
Detect undead (10)	C
Divine recognition (15)	S
Elemental immunity (20)	D
Elemental spell bonus (5)	D
Expert Healer (5/20)**	C/D
Fire/electrical resistance (5)	D
Followers (5/10)	C
Gift of life (25)	S
Hide in shadows (5/10)**	D/S
Hit point bonus (10)	C/D
Immunities (5/15)	S
Immunity to charm (5/10)	D
Immunity to disease (10)	S
Inspire fear (10)	S
Know alignment (10)	C
Languages (10)	S
Lay on hands (10)	S
Move silently (5/10)**	D/S
Pass without trace (5)	D
Purify water (5)	C
Resist energy drain (5)	S
Secret language (5)	D
Shapechange (10/15)	C
Spell duration increase (10)	C
Turn lycanthrope (10)	S
Turn undead (10/15)**	C/S
Ultra vision (10)	S
Warrior-priests (10)	C
Weapon allowance (5)	C
Weapon specialization (15)	C
Wizardly priests (15)	C

* C = cleric list, D = druid list, S = specialty priests (this article)

**The new version of this ability allows for a new option in addition to the original cleric ability powers.

use violence; he simply chooses not to take that route himself.

Self-reliant (20): Some gods favor self reliance among their worshippers. Such gods grant their priests only half the normal spells, rounding up.

Vow of poverty (10): The priest must only possess what money that he needs to survive. Such priests may never own magical items unless they are plain looking, and they must donate all treasure and excess wealth to a worthy, nonplayer character cause.



Brian Linville lives in California. Just outside his front door, he says, lies a sea of craziness just waiting for him to write about it. In the meantime, he continues to do his most creative work in his head while tossing pizzas at work.

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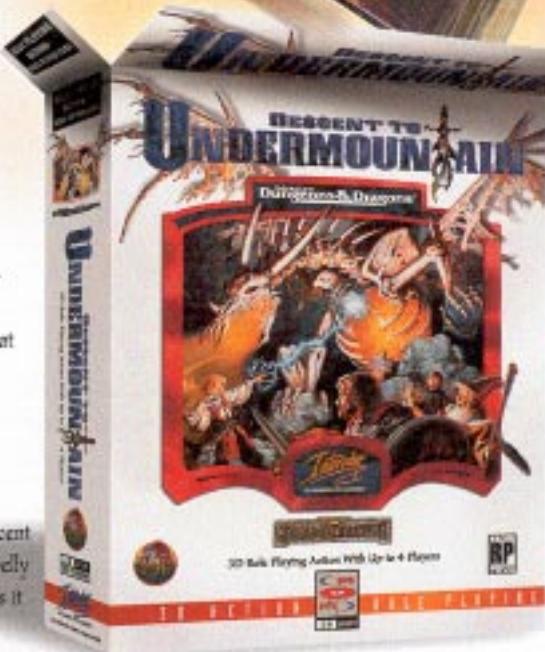
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The Seldarine Revisited

by Chris Perry

illustrated by Susan Van Camp

The portrayals of the elven pantheon (as found in *Monster Mythology*) are a valuable addition to any DM's campaign. However, those looking through the pages on the Seldarine will notice that very few of them allow for non-Chaotic Good priests and that almost none are of Lesser or lower power. Provided herein are the priests of seven lesser-known gods of the Seldarine. Four of the gods (Araleth, Kirith, Melira, and Naralis) were detailed in the article "The Elfin Gods," while another was based on a fifth member (Tarsellis) detailed in the article "In the Frost and the Snow" (both articles appeared in *DRAGON Magazine* issue #155). The remaining two gods and priesthoods (Tethrin and Rellavar) are new.

This article mentions certain deities of the *FORGOTTEN REALMS*® (FR) or the World of *GREYHAWK*® (WG) settings as enemies or allies of these elven gods, and it goes without saying that the various members of the drow and goblinoid pantheons bear them no less enmity. Also from *GREYHAWK* are the xenophobic Wastri (The Hopping Prophet) and the abominable luz to contend with....

Note: Clerical sub-classes mentioned in this article, such as the crusader or mystic, can be found in the *Faiths & Avatars* book.

Araleth Letheranil (The Prince of Stars, The Twilight Rider)

Lesser Power of Arborea, CG

PORTFOLIO: Light, Starlight, Twilight

ALIASES: None

DOMAIN: Arvandor/House of Glowing Stars

SUPERIOR: None

ALLIES: Sehahine Moonbow, Selune (FR), Celestian (WG), Xan Yae (WG), other members of the Seldarine

FOES: Lolth, Shar (FR), Tharizdun (WG)

SYMBOL: A white shaft of light, small at the top and largest at the bottom

WOR. ALIGN: Any non-Lawful Good or Neutral



Araleth is one of the "Second Born," those elven gods who came after the first War of Darkness. He is engaged in an eternal war against the powers of darkness, and is known for his relentless pursuit of the drow when they came forth again (indeed, one of the most commonly known stories concerns his battle with Lolth, from which he bears a scar from her poisoned bite). Accordingly, he is often the favorite choice of adventurers because of his aggressive stance.

Araleth lives in the part of Arborea known as Arvandor in the House of Glowing Stars, a dwelling beset by drifting, glowing stars. He works closely with the rest of the Seldarine as needed, and his priests likewise work with other priesthoods in their efforts to eliminate evil.

The Church

CLERGY: Clerics, specialty priests, crusaders

CLERGY'S ALIGN: NC, CG, N, CN

TURN UNDEAD: C: Yes, SP: Yes, Cru: Yes

CMND UNDEAD: C: No, SP: No, Cru: No

Araleth's clergy have few holy days except for the spring equinox, whereupon they sacrifice items of beauty within a circle illuminated by Starshine spells. They prefer to start their prayers at dusk, just about the time that their god's presence in the heavens can be felt.

While within the confines of the church (or on holy days), clerics and specialty priests of Araleth wear robes of white. At other times they're free to wear whatever they choose (though dark-colored cloth is frowned upon and considered a minor transgression). Clerics make up 50% of the clergy, specialty priests 35%, and crusaders 15%.

Specialty Priests (Twylar)

REQUIREMENTS: Constitution 12

PRIME REQ.: Wisdom 13

ALIGNMENT: Wisdom

WEAPONS: CG

ARMOR: Bow, dagger, sword (short/long), and all bludgeoning weapons

MAJOR SPHERES: Chain, elven chain, scale, and shield

MINOR SPHERES: All, astral, chaos, charm, combat, guardian, numbers, protection, sun,

MINOR SPHERES: Divination, healing, necromantic

MAGICAL ITEMS: Same as priests
REQ. PROFS.: Astronomy
BON. PROFS.: Blind-fighting

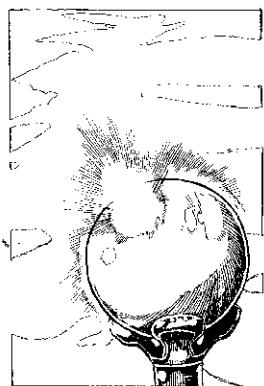
- ❖ At 1st level, Twylars can cast a light spell 1/day. In addition, they receive a +2 on saves vs. magic that affects vision.
- ❖ At 3rd level, Twylars can cast a *starshine* spell 1/day.
- ❖ At 5th level, Twylars receive automatic saves against spells that cause blindness or darkness, and can cast *neutralize poison* 1/day.
- ❖ At 7th level, Twylars can cast *continual light* 1/day, and they receive automatic saves vs. spider poison.
- ❖ At 9th level, Twylars can cast a *sunray* spell 1/day.
- ❖ At 12th level, Twylars receive a +2 bonus against spells cast at them by drow elves. In addition, the magic resistance of drow who are the targets of the Twylars' spells is lowered by 10% for the purposes of determining whether their spells get through.

Kirith Sotheril (The Magess)
Lesser Power of Elysium,
NG

PORTFOLIO: Divination magic, Enchantment magic
ALIASES: None
DOMAIN: Amoria/Tethridar
SUPERIOR: Corellon Larethian
ALLIES: Corellon Larethian, Tethrin Veralde', others
FOES: None
SYMBOL: Rainbow-striped sphere
WOR. ALIGN: Any Good or Neutral

Magic is a very important part of elven life, and while Corellon Larethian holds magic to be part of his portfolio, other elven gods lay claim to more specific forms of magic. Kirith Sotheril is one such deity whose portfolio concerns magic, in this case divinations and enchantments. She and Sehahine Moonbow are rivals of a sort, since in many worlds Sehahine considers herself to be the patroness of the subtler forms of magic, but they're far from enemies.

Kirith dwells on the first layer of Elysium, Amoria, within the realm of



Tethridar. Because this is also the home of Tethrin Veralde' (another elven god), stories consistently portray them as lovers (the truth of this is unknown).

The Church

CLERGY: Clerics, specialty priests, specialist wizards
CLERGY'S ALIGN: LG, NG, CG, LN, N
TURN UNDEAD: C: No, SP: No, W: No
CMND. UNDEAD: C: No, SP: No, W: No

Kirith's priesthood are comprised of clerics (40%), specialty priests (40%), and specialist wizards (diviners and enchanters make up 10% each). On holy days they wear multi-colored robes and give prayers and pieces of knowledge as a form of sacrifice to their goddess. It's interesting to note that while the high clergy can declare a holy day in light of special events (an omen from Kirith, the successful completion of a powerful magic, etc.), they also consider days of the full moon to be holy — the same days that priests of Sehahine revere. However, they hold their services in the daytime.

Specialty Priests (Zivorns)

REQUIREMENTS: Intelligence 12, Wisdom 13
PRIME REQ.: Intelligence, Wisdom
ALIGNMENT: NG
WEAPONS: Dagger, dart, quarter-staff, sword (short), footman's mace

ARMOR: None
MAJOR SPHERES: All, charm, creation, divination, elemental, guardian, healing, numbers, protection, thought

MINOR SPHERES: Necromantic, sun
MAGICAL ITEMS: As clerics, plus wizard items

REQ. PROFS.: Spellcraft
BON. PROFS.: None

❖ Zivorns may cast an *armor* or *shield* spell 1/day.

❖ Zivorns may cast *detect charm* 1/day for every 3 experience levels.

❖ Zivorns receive a +2 on saving throws vs. divination or enchantment/charm magic of any sort.

❖ At 3rd level, Zivorns may choose to receive spells from the Divination or Enchantment/Charm schools of magic. Such spells must be prayed for as any other spell, and they take up one space of a standard priest spell of the same level. Wizard spells of up to 6th level may be accessed in this manner.

❖ At 5th level, Zivorns can cast *call upon faith* 1/day.

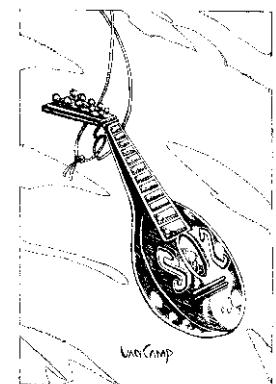
❖ At 7th level, Zivorns may cast a Divination Enhancement spell (see *Tome of Magic*) 1/day.

❖ At 10th level, Zivorns can cast *undead ward* 1/week.

❖ At 12th level, Zivorns can cast *legend lore* or *steal enchantment* 1/day.

❖ At 14th level, Zivorns may cast either a *prismatic spray* or *prismatic sphere* 1/week.

Taralen
(The Songstress, Patron of Bards and Minstrels)
Lesser Power of Arborea, CG



PORTFOLIO: Half-elven bards, elven minstrels, songwriting
Aliases: None
DOMAIN: Arvandor/Evergold
SUPERIOR: Hanali Celanil
ALLIES: Corellon Larethian, Hanali Celanil, Milil (FR), Oghma (FR), Oidammara (WG)

FOES: None
SYMBOL: A golden lute on a blue background

WOR. ALIGN: Any
Melira Taralen is a lesser goddess who, like many of her followers, has a patron (in this case, Corellon). It is said that her mother Hanali Celanil sent her to Corellon to serve as an apprentice, foundly with her skills that he set a place in the stars for her. Melira is most often

Evergold, singing and playing while her mother relaxes. If she has any rivals, it is the Faerunian god Milil, whom she feels may be "poaching" in her territory. Still, theirs is a friendly rivalry, and he sometimes

duets with her. She also enjoys Oidammara's exploits, though he's often too roguish for her taste.

Melira's faithful tend to be musically-inclined and appreciative of music. Not only are musicians favored by her, but also those who act as patrons, and those who treat their musicians well are

said sometimes to receive a boon from the goddess.

The Church

CLERGY:	Specialty priests, bards, minstrels, mystics
CLERGY'S ALIGN.:	CG, NC, CN, N
TURN UNDEAD:	SP: No, B: No, M: No, Mys: No
CMND UNDEAD:	SP: No, B: No, M: No, Mys: No

Melira's clergy doesn't include normal clerics, she's only interested in having those with proven musical talent within her church. Not that she dislikes those with no talent — in fact, one of the goals of her priests are to help train others in singing, strumming, and songwriting. Such efforts warm her heart.

The majority of her clergy are specialty priests (70%), the rest being a mix of half-elven bards, elven minstrels, and other sorts. She has few temples solely dedicated to her, instead preferring shrines placed in guildhalls as well as those within temples of Hanali Celanil. They have no set holy days, instead declaring a holy day just before the advent of a festival. On such days they'll wear robes of bright blue, and they celebrate by singing, reciting poems, and dancing. They have few duties aside from perfecting their (and others') musical skills.

Specialty priests (Brystars)

REQUIREMENTS:	Dexterity 13, Intelligence 12, Wisdom 13
PRIME REQ.:	Dexterity, Wisdom
ALIGNMENT:	CG
WEAPONS:	Bow (short), dagger, short sword, all bludgeoning weapons
ARMOR:	Leather or elven chain
MAJOR SPHERES:	All, chaos, charm, creation, guardian, healing, protection, summoning, sun
MINOR SPHERES:	Divination, plant, wards
MAGICAL ITEMS:	As cleric and bard
REQ. PROFS.:	Artistic ability (poetry or songwriting)
BON. PROFS.:	Musical instrument or singing (pick one)

❖ Though noted as being unable to turn undead in the conventional sense, Brystars are able to play or sing a song of turning. This is equal to the standard turning ability, except that a musical instrument is required and it may be attempted 3/day, no more.

❖ Brystars are able to sing a song of sleep (as the 1st level wizard spell) 1/day. In addition, they receive a +2 on saving throws vs. sound-based attacks.

❖ At 3rd level, Brystars can sing a countersong (like a bard) which nullifies the attacks of harpies and the like, 3/day. In addition, they may cast a *sound bubble* (see *Complete Bard's Handbook*) 1/day.

❖ At 5th level, Brystars are able to sing a song of holding 1/day. The priest must decide whether it is to work only 1-4 human/ humanoid beings (as per *hold person* spell), or upon a single monster (as per *hold monster* spell).

❖ At 7th level, Brystars are able to sing a song of *sending* or *suggestion*, 1/day. No musical instrument is required, only a vocal component, though the former is a welcome addition.

❖ At 10th level, Alynars can cast a *wall of sound* (see *Complete Bard's Handbook*) 1/day.

❖ At 12th level, Brystars may sing a Song of *mass charm* or *mass suggestion* 1/day.

❖ At 16th level, Brystars may sing a song of *binding*, 1/month. This is usually used only to restrain some rampaging extraplanar being, or as a threat to make it leave.

Naralis
Analar
(The Healer, The Watcher of Souls)
Lesser Power of Elysium, NG



PORTFOLIO: Healing, the Easing of Pain, Death

ALIASES: None

DOMAIN: Amoria/The Healing Glade

SUPERIOR: Sehahine Moonbow

ALLIES: Sehahine Moonbow, Labelas Enoreth, Ilmater (FR), Kelemvor (FR)

FOES: Loviatar (FR), Nerull (WC), Null (Draconic)

SYMBOL: A white dove-shield

WOR. ALIGN: Any Good or Neutral

Naralis is an elven god whose primary interest is not just the safeguarding of elven souls after they depart, but also healing of the living. As Sehahine guides the

souls to their time of leaving, he serves Sehahine in making sure they reach their proper destination. He is one of the few death gods who isn't malevolent or uncaring, and he's very popular in those worlds where his worship is practiced. Like Tethrin and Kirith, Naralis resides on the first layer of Elysium, but he has his own realm, called The Healing Glade, where he conducts his godly duties.

Naralis's worshippers are those who are concerned with keeping their fellow elves healthy, and in caring for those who are going to die. Some adventurers give their respect to Naris in the hope he'll be able to turn the next potential deathblow away from them.

The Church

CLERGY:	Clerics, specialty priests
CLERGY'S ALIGN.:	LG, NG, CG, CN, N, LN
TURN UNDEAD:	C: Yes, SP: Yes
CMND UNDEAD:	C: Yes, SP: Yes

Naris's clergy is comprised of clerics (60%) and specialty priests (40%), and they work together harmoniously. During times of the new moon they wear white cowls and gray-and-white robes. During services, they give prayers and crafted items to Naris, and when a funeral is being carried out they will leave such items with the body of the deceased, be it in a vault or in a grave. (It's said that the elven tradition of planting a tree over the body of a dead elf was started by his clergy as a means of continuing the life process, but others aren't so sure). Other than handling death ceremonies, the duties of Naris's priests are to tend to the sick and the dying.

Specialty Priests (Heralars)

REQUIREMENTS:	Constitution 12, Wisdom 14
PRIME REQ.:	Constitution, Wisdom
ALIGNMENT:	NG
WEAPONS:	Flail (foot or horse), dagger, knife, sword (long/short)
ARMOR:	Chain, leather, plate, or scale plus shield
MAJOR SPHERES:	All, creation, divination, guardian, healing, necromantic, protection, sun, time, wards
MINOR SPHERES:	Charm, law
MAGICAL ITEMS:	Same as clerics
REQ. PROFS.:	Healing
BON. PROFS.:	Ancient history or religion

❖ Heralars are able to turn undead as if they were 2 levels higher, and can cast an *invisibility to undead* spell 1/day.

❖ Heralars can remove the pain from a suffering being 2/day, and the recipient must make a saving throw. If it is failed, the pain is gone for only 2-7 hours, but if the save is successful then it is banished for 1 day/level of the priest. This touch can be used to nullify the effects of certain spells (such as *symbols of pain*).

❖ Spells of healing cast by Heralars are enhanced to where they will not heal less than half of that which is possible by the spell. A *cure light wounds*, for example, will not heal less than 4 points of damage.

❖ At 3rd level, Heralars may cast a *slow poison* spell 1/day.

❖ At 5th level, Heralars can cast *cure disease* or *accelerate healing* 1/day.

❖ At 7th level, Heralars cast *draw upon holy might* or *cure critical wounds* 1/day.

❖ At 10th level, Heralars can cast a *heal* spell 1/week.

❖ At 12th level, Heralars are protected by a permanent *negative plane protection* spell.

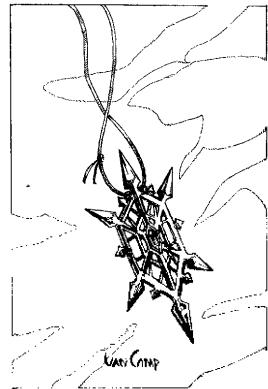
❖ At 16th level, Heralars can cast a *spirit of power* spell 1/month.

Tarsellis
Meunniduin
(Patron of
Snow Elves,
Lord of
Mountains)

Intermediate
Power of
Ysgard, CN

Portfolio: Mountains, rivers, snow elves, wilderness
Aliases: None
Domain: Ysgard/The Wild Hunt
Superior: None
Allies: Fenmarel Mestarne, Rellavar Danuvien, Shaundakul (FR), Pharlanghn (WG), Ulaa (WG)
Foes: Loth
Symbol: Snowcapped mountain
WOR. ALIGN: Any non-Lawful Good or Neutral

Tarsellis is the patron god of those known as snow elves, who mainly inhabit the Crystalmist mountains of Oerth. (Rumor has it that snow elves also exist on the far reaches of the Spine of the World or even the High Ice portion of Anauroch in Faerûn, though this is unproven.) Though he visits the other members of the Seldarine on Arborea,



he prefers to wander the realms of Ysgard (word has it that he dallies in the realms of Vanaheim and Elfheim when he isn't home in The Wild Ride). Tarsellis is a hearty warrior and a capable hunter, so it's a surprise that he and Solonar Thelandira aren't friends. The truth is that they once were but that they had an argument over another deity. In some tales Hanali is depicted as the goddess responsible, but older tales indicate that it was Lolth who (before The War of Darkness, when she wasn't yet wholly evil) caused the rift between them. It should also be said that Tarsellis is a rival of sorts with Rillifane Rallathil, since Tarsellis also claims to have control of those forests which grow among the mountain ranges. Tarsellis's followers are almost wholly snow elves, though others sometimes give tribute to him as Lord of the Mountains.

Church

CLERGY: Clerics, specialty priests, rangers, shamans

CLERGY'S ALIGN.: NC, CG, CN, N

TURN UNDEAD: C: Yes, SP: No, Sha: No

CMND. UNDEAD: C: No, SP: No, Sha: No

Tarsellis's clergy is generally split up into localized groups. Shamans make up a bare majority of his priesthood (55%), though clerics, specialty priests, and rangers hold more power in the civilized regions. The raiment of the priesthood differ, but generally consist of white robes and furred cloak and boots (holy symbols are made of bone or ivory). Temples are few, and the priests' primary duty is to watch over their fellow snow elves and to erect shrines near mountain passes and mountain tops.

Specialty Priests (Peakwardens)

REQUIREMENTS: Strength 12, Wisdom 12

PRIME REQ.: Strength, Wisdom

ALIGNMENT: CG, CN, N

WEAPONS: Club, dagger, knife, spear, and all bludgeoning weapons

ARMOR: Leather, hide, or dragon-scale plus shield

MAJOR SPHERES: All, animal, chaos, combat, elemental (earth/water), guardian, healing, protection, travelers, Weather

MINOR SPHERES: Creation, divination, elemental (air/fire), plant

MAGICAL ITEMS: Same as cleric

REQ. PROFS.: Spear, survival (arctic)
BON. REQS.: Mountaineering

❖ Peakwardens receive a +2 bonus to hit with spears, whether thrown or held. In addition, they use the fighter THAC0 table when using spears in combat.

❖ Peakwardens suffer -1/hit die less damage from natural phenomena, whether its from an earthquake, falling down a cliff, or flames from a forest fire.

❖ Peakwardens can cast *detect snare* and *pits* or *pass without trace* 1/day.

❖ At 3rd level, peakwardens can cast *aura of comfort* or *lighten load* 1/day.

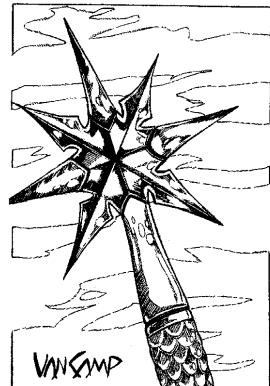
❖ At 5th level, peakwardens can cast *hallucinatory forest* or *distance distortion* 1/day.

❖ At 8th level, peakwardens can cast *Weather Stasis* 1/day.

❖ At 12th level, peakwardens can cast *find the path* 1/day, and in addition can cast a *stone walk* spell 1/month (as per the Banite spell found in *Faiths & Avatars*, page 42).

Rellavar Danuvien

(The Frost
Sprite King,
Warder
Against
Elements)
Lesser Power
of the
Beastlands,
NG



Portfolio:

Aliases: Frost Sprites, Protection from the Elements (particularly the cold)
Domain: None

Superior: Karasuthra/the Ice Plain
None

Allies: Tarsellis Meunniduin, Solonar Thelandira, Tethrin Veralde', Erevan Ilesere

Foes: Auril (FR), Surtr (frost giant god)

Symbol: A silver spear with a white circle to either side of the shaft

WOR. ALIGN: NG, N

Rellavar Danuvien is another god of the snow elves, acting as a ward against the severe cold. He used to serve Tarsellis a long time ago, but his continuing friendship with Solonar strained theirs a bit. Now he's an independent god, though he can count on help from both against the machinations of Auril and Surtr (both beings whose power is based on ice and cold). He's good

friends with Erevan Ilesere, who is himself a patron of faerie folk (though of the larger community of faeries and sprites).

Rellavar's priests seek to mitigate the effects of the elements on the elvenfolk, particularly cold. They're also important in keeping those elves found in the arctic in arms, enchanting ice so that it has the strength of steel. Someday, his following among the snow and ice elves may eclipse that of his former benefactor.

The Church

THE CLERGY:	Clerics, specialty priests
CLERGY'S ALIGN:	NG, N
TURN UNDEAD:	C: No, SP: No
CMND UNDEAD:	C: No, SP: No

Rellavar's clergy consists of clerics and specialty priests, and though evenly proportioned it may change in favor of the specialty priests in the next decade or so. They have the support of several orders of rangers, as well as a rare order of elven wyrmslayers (a form of paladin, or so it's been rumored).

Rellavar's clergy prefer to dress in blue and white, though furs aren't used as much in their raiment as Tarsellis's priests. They hold holy days whenever a dangerous undertaking is about to begin, when enemies beset the settlements of their people, or a particularly bad blizzard is underway. Usually the offerings are of hardened, sculpted ice or bone, though very important ceremonies call for sacrificing valuable objects made of other materials.

Specialty Priests (Frostwardens)

REQUIREMENTS:	Constitution 13, Wisdom 13
PRIME REQ.:	Wisdom
ALIGNMENT:	NG, N
WEAPONS:	Axe (battle/hand) club, dagger, knife, spear, sword (long)
Armor:	Fur, hide, leather, elven chain, or dragonscale (plus shield)
MAJOR SPHERES:	All, animal, charm, combat, divination, guardian, healing, protection, wards, weather
MINOR SPHERES:	Elemental, necromantic
MAGICAL ITEMS:	Same as cleric
REQ. PROFS.:	Spear, fire building
BON. PROFS.:	Weather sense

- ❖ Frostwardens are immune to natural cold, and receive a +3 on saving throws vs. all cold-based attacks.
- ❖ Frostwardens may cast *resist cold* or *resist fire* upon themselves or another person, 1/day.

❖ At 3rd level, frostwardens may cast an *aid* or *call upon faith* spell 1/day.

❖ At 5th level, frostwardens may cast *protection from fire* or *protection from lightning*, 1/day.

❖ At 7th level, frostwardens may use a variation of the *call wood/and beings* spell which will summon 2-5 frost sprites instead, 1/day (80% chance of success). In addition, frostwardens' resistance to cold develops to where they suffer either half or no damage from cold-based attacks, depending upon whether they save or not.

❖ At 9th level, frostwardens may cast *icesteel* (a variant of the *glassteel* spell) once per week. This is useful in creating durable bladed weapons, such as long swords, out of ice.

❖ At 12th level, frostwardens gain the ability to turn cold-based creatures, much as other clerics turn undead. The priest can turn back no more than twice their experience level in Hit Dice, though up to 5 other priests may join in and add their levels to the principal priest for the purpose of determining how many hit dice worth are affected.

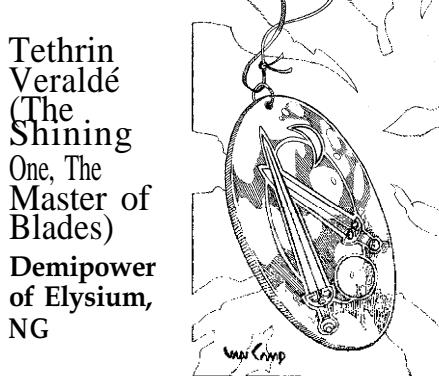
Tethrin the Shining One is the patron god of bladesingers and swordsmen, and is apparently the son of both Corellon and Sehahine, though only recently has he begun to develop a following among the elves. An adventurous, strident god, he believes in the power of elven blades and magic to win the day, and likewise encourages his followers to use such to protect and further the elven cause. Tethrin has few enemies save Lolth (who would like to deal a personal blow to Corellon and Sehahine by slaying him) and the Faerûnian drow demipower Selvetarm (he may have been sent by Lolth to kill Tethrin, though it failed). On Oerth, he gained the ire of Hextor by helping Heironeous settle some matters there, and so he must watch out for him. Still, if he were slain, Corellon would reinstate him, so his worries are somewhat alleviated.

Although Tethrin spends much of his time on Arborea, he shares the realms of Tethridar on the first layer of Elysium with the goddess Kirith Sotheril, his lover and confidant. It's a small but pleasant place, complete with a large copse of trees as well as a fruit orchard. There, amid the trees and open field, followers of his who have died continually practice and hone their skills.

The Church

THE CLERGY:	Clerics, specialty priests, bladesingers, fighters
CLERGY'S ALIGN.:	LG, NG, CG, LN, N, CN
TURN UNDEAD:	C: Yes, SP: Yes, Bld: No, F: No
CMND. UNDEAD:	C: No, SP: No, Bld: No, F: No

Tethrin's clergy is comprised of clerics (30%) specialty priests (30%), bladesingers (20%), and fighters (20%). They stress the value of swordsmanship as well as the mixing of swords and magic, among other things. Tethrin's holy days are in fact held on the same day as Sehahine and Corellon's, whereupon they give thanks for the blessed union which brought forth Tethrin. Also, once each month a special day is held in which they show off their fighting skills and attempt to bring in new converts. Known as Tethrin's Match, it usually brings a healthy amount of attention, and they generally succeed in their efforts. Already there are several orders of bladesingers and warriors' guilds who are dedicated to him. As for what the clergy wear during holy days, they gen-



PORTFOLIO:	Bladesingers, swordsmanship
ALIASES:	None
DOMAIN:	Amoria/Tethridar
SUPERIOR:	Corellon Larethian
ALLIES:	Corellon Larethian, Sehahine Moonbow, Solonor Thelandira
FOES:	Selvetarm (FR), Lolth, Hextor (WG)
Symbol:	A long and a short sword lying parallel to each other on a disk, their blade tips angled toward the upper left; a quarter moon lies above the swords, while a full moon lies underneath
WOR. ALIGN.:	Any Good or Neutral

Continued on page 25



ELEMENTAL SUMMONING GONE WILD

by Ed Bonny
illustrated by Michael Scott

Marelney wiped the sweat from her brow and watched the battle rage before her. The crimson sun, perched high in the sky, beat unmercifully down on the exhausted air cleric. Two of her companions were down, dying if not already dead. The sands before the oasis were quickly turning into a thick, red mud from the blood of the slain and wounded. Both sides were taking a terrific beating. Unfortunately for Marelney, the elven marauders fighting her friends looked like they were going to win. These elves had been preying on the new pterran trade route for months and now they sought to prey on Marelney and her comrades. Helping the marauders was a powerful elven ally situated just inside the oasis — a wizard who was destroying the oasis with his magic. Five times during the battle, the defiling elf had cast spells. Five times, the terrible circle of ash surrounding the elf grew larger and larger.

Her friends needed help soon and only Marelney might save the day. Quickly the cleric set about casting a spell that would conjure an air elemental to her side. As she began, familiar winds which accompanied every spell Marelney cast gently arose around her. Within seconds she finished the casting but something was different, something had gone wrong! No air elemental appeared! Instead the gently blowing air gathering around Marelney began to gust. The bizarre winds became stronger — too strong thought Marelney. Very soon vicious blasts of roaring air began to batter the combatants around. Stinging sand, airborne from the fierce winds, bit into Marelney's skin. As a cleric of the air, she knew she could protect herself from this freakish sirocco but only for a short while. Unless the others could run through this sudden raging windstorm, they were likely to be scoured to death by the flesh-eroding sand. Invoking her elemental ability to ignore the very air itself Marelney raced to escape the sandstorm. She looked back to see if any of her party were still up but could only glimpse exposed white bone poking through the sand-blasted skin of their fallen bodies. Frightened and confused, Marelney questioned this strange sign from the elemental powers of air. What was happening? What did it mean? What went so horribly wrong?

Elemental powers and summoning

Nowhere in any AD&D® campaign setting are there priests that compare to the exotic elemental clerics of Athas. Where the priests of other realms strive for the greater glory of their gods, the savage clerics of the **DARK SUN®** setting wage a daily struggle for survival in this twisted land, long defiled by centuries of magical devastation.

The elemental powers choose their worshippers carefully, as they understand that the health of Athas rests on their champions' shoulders. The elemental powers have no doubts that only their clerics can return a sound elemental balance to Athas and undo the defiling damage that nearly wasted the planet millennia ago. In order for the elemental powers to aid their champions in this mission of ecological preservation, they send forth beings of elemental force to serve their clerics.

At 5th level, elemental clerics may summon a true elemental via the 3rd-level spell *conjure lesser elemental*. At 9th level, a cleric may cast the 5th-level priest spell *conjure elemental* to call upon a stronger elemental ally. Finally upon achieving 14th level, elemental clerics may summon the most powerful elementals with the 7th-level spell *conjure greater elemental*. The elemental powers also work with other agents (druids, preservers and spellcasting rangers) by sending them elemental beings when the proper spell is cast. Defilers, on the other hand, can never conjure elementals, because the elemental powers never send elemental beings into the service of the mages responsible for reducing Athas into the wasteland it is today.

Elemental malfunctions

Usually, *conjure elemental* and its lesser and greater versions function precisely as described. On rare occasions, however, an elemental spell malfunctions. Why this occurs on Athas is directly attributable to the simple truth that the elemental powers are not deities but are in fact less-than-perfect beings who may err. The



Table 1: Conjure lesser elemental summoning malfunctions

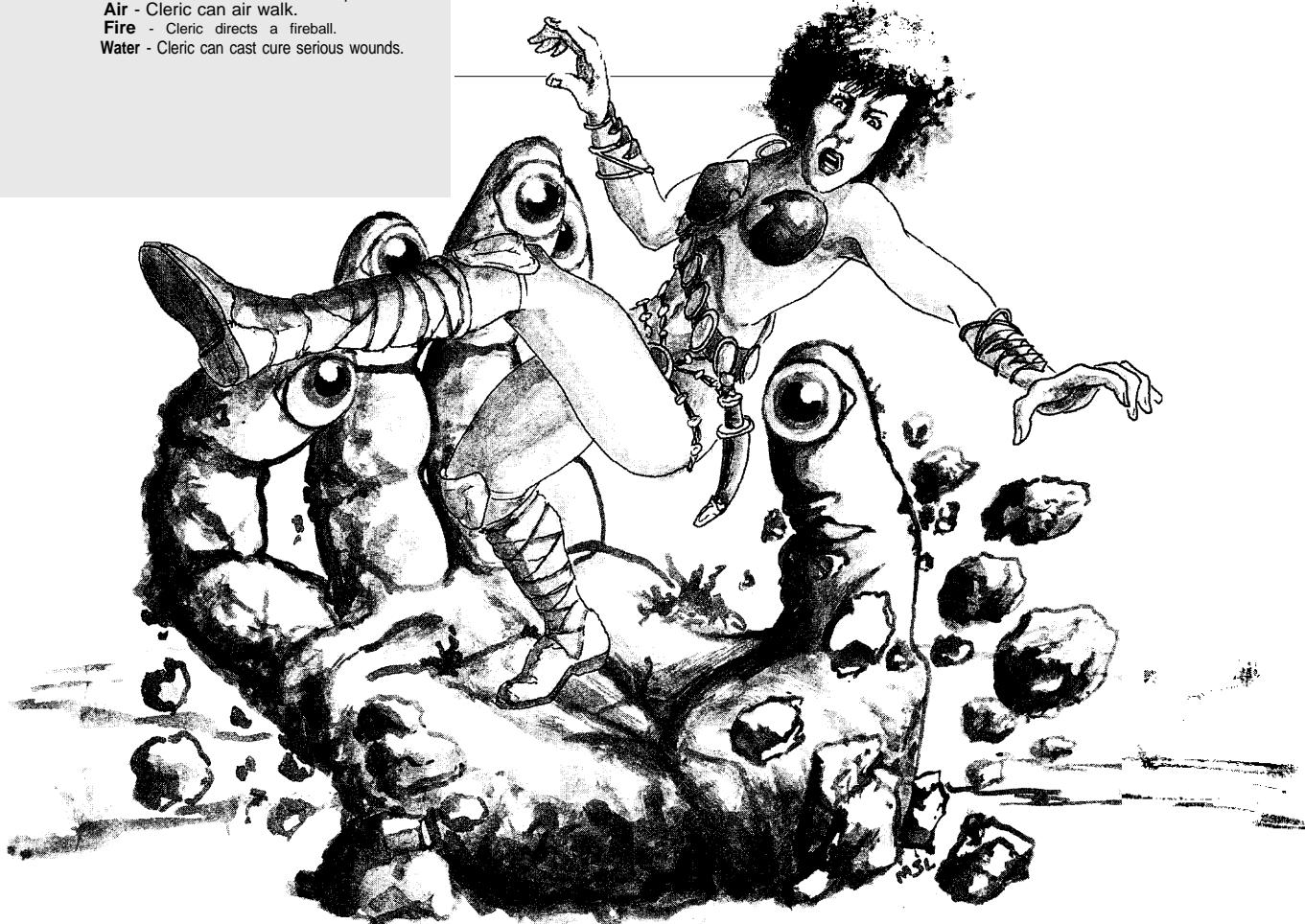
Roll 2d8	Result
2	Rental appears and attacks the cleric.
4	Elemental sparking: Cleric's body continually exudes small useless amounts of his element for 24 hours (i.e., fire cleric gives off harmless sparks, earth cleric emits small clouds of dust, etc.).
5	1d3 mephits.
6	2d4 elemental vermin.
7	Elemental beasts.
8	1d4 elemental grues.
9	Spell functions but each elemental summoned has either 1 hp per hit die or 50% of total hit points (50% chance of either occurring).
10	Spell functions but each elemental summoned does only 1 hp damage on a successful hit.
11	Spell seems to function normally; however, elementals refuse to obey cleric and return to home plane when first attacked.
12	Elementally severed: Spell fails and cleric is cut off from elemental sphere for 2d6 rounds and cannot cast any spells.
13	Elemental bonding: Cleric is safely bathed in element for next round and healed of 2d8+2 hp damage.
14	Elemental blessing: Cleric casts all spells as if 2 levels higher for next 12 hours.
15	Spell functions as the 5th-level <i>conjure elemental</i> spell.
16	Roll on Subtable 1 for spectacular elemental spell effect.

Subtable 1: Spectacular minor elemental spell effect

Roll 1d4	Result
1	Earth - Cleric grabbed by <i>Maximillian's earthen grasp</i> . Air - <i>Stinking cloud</i> centered on cleric. Fire - Cleric struck by <i>burning hands</i> . Water - Cleric affected by <i>heat exhaustion</i> .
2	Earth - Cleric affected by <i>fist of stone</i> . Air - Cleric can call lightning even if storm is not present. Fire - Cleric directs a <i>flaming sphere</i> . Water - Cleric directs <i>insatiable thirst</i> .
3	Earth - Cleric grabbed by <i>Maximillian's stony grasp</i> . Air - <i>Solid fog</i> centered on cleric. Fire - Cleric affected by <i>heat exhaustion</i> . Water - Cleric affected by <i>insatiable thirst</i> .
4	Earth - Cleric directs <i>stone shape</i> . Air - Cleric can air walk. Fire - Cleric directs a fireball. Water - Cleric can cast cure serious wounds.

majority of summoning malfunctions have a malevolent effect but there are occasions when the effect can be beneficial to the cleric.

Spell malfunctions occur for a variety of reasons and usually are accompanied by bizarre results. Sometimes because of a miscommunication or because the elemental powers cannot spare any elementals at the moment, they send different types of elemental beings to the caster, creatures such as elemental beasts or mephits. At other times, the elemental powers cannot afford to send any beings to the cleric. Instead, the cleric may benefit from an elemental boon such as a protective or offensive spell. A mishandling of elemental energy by the cleric may bring about a backlash of elemental energy or perhaps center an undesirable elemental spell effect on the casting cleric. The ever-scheming para-elemental powers may even sabotage an elemental cleric's spell and send one of their own para-elementals to kill the cleric instead.



Malfunction mechanics

When a PC attempts to summon an elemental, DMs should roll for a malfunction. If no malfunction occurs, the spell functions normally. If there is a malfunction, the DM must determine the type (standard or spectacular).

1. Roll for a malfunction.

In game terms, a summoning malfunction occurs when any one of the following conditions are met:

❖ The elemental cleric attempts to conjure an elemental and fails his wisdom spell success roll.

❖ Clerics attempting elemental summoning via spell have a 5% chance of bringing about a malfunction. Druids, preservers and rangers, because of their lack of expertise in handling elemental energies, have an increased likelihood of a summoning malfunction (20% chance for druids, 35% chance for preservers, and 10% chance for rangers) when they attempt to cast any of the conjure elemental spells. The DM secretly rolls 1d100 to determine if a malfunction occurs.

❖ Any magical devices specifically used to summon elementals have a 10% chance (on a d00) of causing a summoning malfunction each time they are employed. Again, the DM secretly rolls the chance of this occurring.

Fiendish DMs may increase the chance of a malfunction under certain unusual circumstances (i.e. casting occurs in the disruptive presence of high levels of defiling magic or para-elemental magic, etc.).

2. Determine the type of malfunction.

Standard Malfunction: On a successful malfunction, DMs must consult the appropriate Summoning Malfunction table based on which version of conjure elemental spell was cast and roll 2d8 to determine the random elemental effect. A roll falling between a 2 and 16 means that a standard malfunction occurred and the DM should look up the appropriate effect.

Spectacular malfunction: A roll of a 2 or 16 on 2d8 indicates that a spectacular elemental spell effect has occurred. Consult the appropriate Spectacular Elemental Spell Effect Subtable and roll 1d4 for a random effect based on the cleric's element. The following additional rules come into play when a spectacular elemental spell effect occurs:

Table 2: Conjure elemental summoning malfunction table

Roll 2d8	Result
2	Roll on Subtable 2 for spectacular elemental spell effect.
3	Horror! Para-elements intercede and send a 12-HD para-elemental to attack cleric.
4	Elemental Backlash! Character suffers 2d8+4 hp damage as elemental spell energy is mishandled during casting. Cleric is further unable to cast spells from own elemental sphere for next 1d6 turns.
5	2d4 mephits*
6	Elemental beasts***
7	2d4+2 elemental grues****
8	Spell functions as 3rd level spell <i>conjure lesser elemental</i> .
9	Spell functions but each elemental summoned has either 1 hit point per hit die or 50% of total hit points (50% chance of either occurring).
10	Spell appears to function but the arriving elementals refuse to obey cleric and return to home plane when first attacked.
11	Elemental Imbalance! Elemental energy wildly courses through the cleric's body randomly empowering and invigorating cleric or nauseating and enervating cleric. Cleric has a 50% chance of casting all spells as either 3 levels higher or lower each time a spell is cast for the next 1d4 hours.
12	Elemental powers cannot send aid to cleric but instead teleport cleric 1 mile away in a random direction thus removing cleric from possibly harmful situation (but abandoning comrades at same time).
13	Elemental Infusion: Cleric is healed of all wounds, diseases, and poisons.
14	Cleric is temporarily transformed into a standard 12 HD elemental of the cleric's element for spell's duration gaining special attack abilities and weaknesses of a true elemental of the same level. Cleric keeps own hit points and THAC0 but cannot cast spells in elemental form. At spell's end, cleric reverts back to normal form and is healed of 2d8+2 hp damage.
15	Spell functions as 7th-level spell <i>conjure greater elemental</i> .
16	Roll on Subtable 2 for spectacular elemental spell effect.

Subtable 2: Spectacular elemental spell effect

Roll 1d4	Result
1	Earth - Cleric affected by <i>infestation</i> . Air - <i>Cloudkill</i> centered on cleric. Fire - Cleric struck by <i>flame arrow</i> . Water - Cleric affected by <i>lungs of water</i> . Earth - <i>Wall of stone</i> in front of cleric.
2	Air - <i>Wind wall</i> in front of cleric. Fire - <i>Wall of fire</i> in front of cleric. Water - <i>Wall of ice</i> in front of cleric. Earth - <i>Whirlpool of doom</i> centered on cleric. Air - <i>Death fog</i> centered on cleric. Fire - <i>Fireball</i> centered on cleric. Water - <i>Ice storm</i> centered on cleric.
3	Earth - Cleric protected by a <i>stoneskin</i> . Air - Cleric can call down an <i>airboat</i> any time in next 24 hours. Fire - Cleric is protected by a <i>fire shield</i> . Water - Cleric can direct a <i>cone of cold</i> .
4	

Spectacular effects

All special elemental spells are treated as if the cleric had cast the spell himself with regard to duration, damage, area of effect, etc. unless the spell states otherwise. Spectacular effects take place immediately whether or not the caster controls the spell.

A cleric is allowed a saving throw against any malevolent spell effect targeting the cleric. Area effect spells such as *fireball* or ice storm still take effect even if the cleric saves. In the instance of a *fireball*, a fire cleric would suffer half damage on a successful save unless the cleric had already activated his ability to ignore his element — fire. Most likely however, a cleric affected by a malevolent spell is taken by surprise and thus is affected normally by the spell.

An elemental cleric who is affected by a benevolent spell receives full knowledge of the spell and all its various effects, applications, etc.

DMs should be aware that some spell effects have a considerable duration (i.e., *sirocco*) that may last far longer than the cleric's ability to ignore an element. A

cleric who can no longer ignore his element and is still within a spell's effect suffers the spell's normal effects.

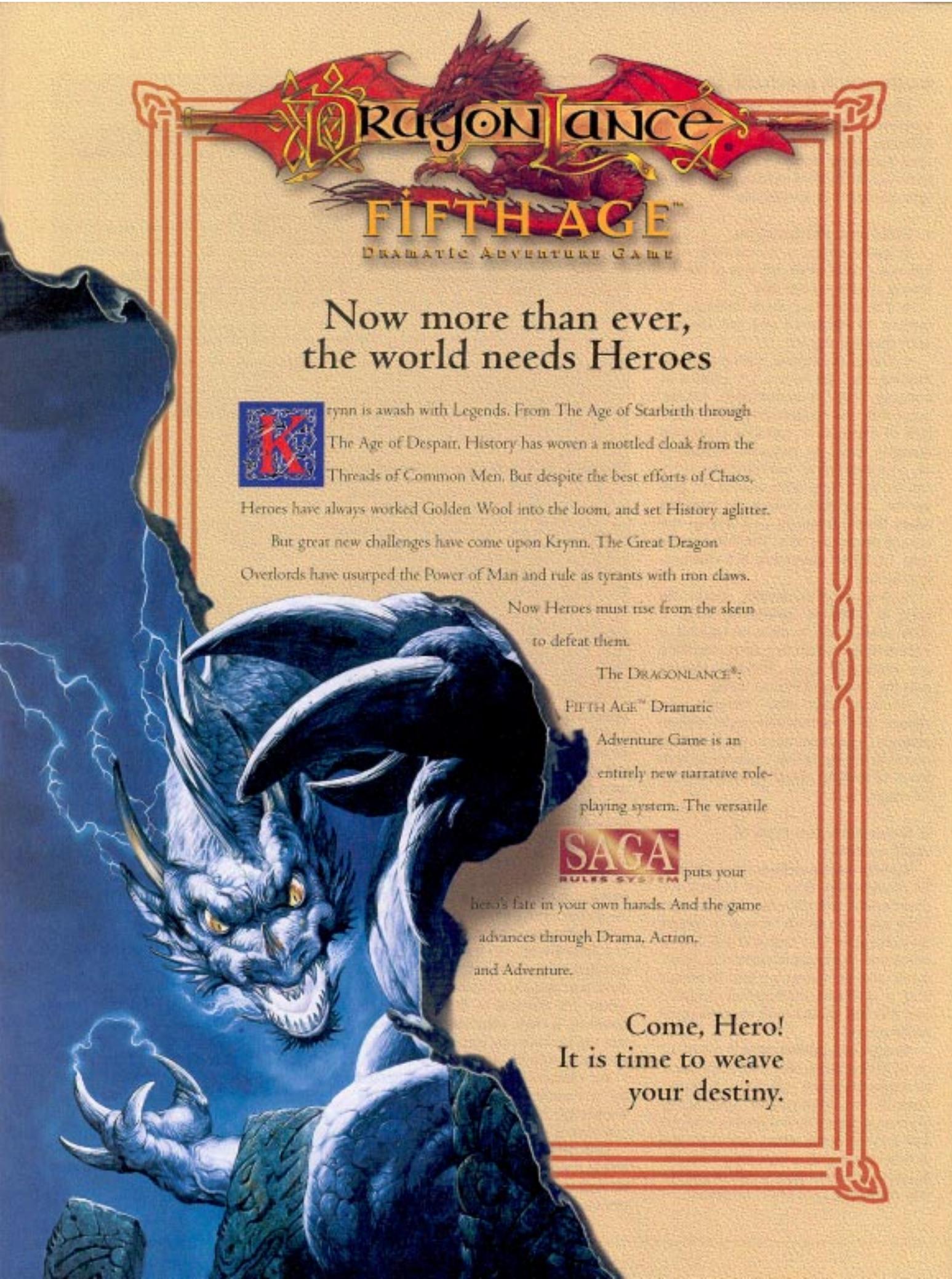
Regardless of whether a beneficial or malevolent effect occurs, a cleric whose summoning had a spectacular malfunction cannot cast any conjuration/summoning spells for the next 1d4+2 hours.

All wizard and priest spells listed in the Spectacular Malfunction Tables may be found in the *Player's Handbook*, *Tome of Magic*, and *Earth, Air, Fire & Water*.

Other classes that can summon elementals

The summoning malfunction tables may be easily modified for use in DARK SUN campaigns that allow para-elemental cleric PCs. These tables cannot be used by templars since templars aren't allowed elemental summoning spells from their sorcerer-kings. Because of the greater chance of malfunction for druids, these nature priests are more likely to summon assistance from animals on their guarded lands than to call

Continued on page 24



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Table 3: Conjure greater elemental summoning malfunction

Roll 2d8	Result
2	Roll on Subtable 3 for spectacular elemental spell effect.
3	Horror! The interloping para-elemental powers intercede and send a 16-HD para-elemental to attack the cleric.
4	Elemental burnout! The mishandling of elemental energy by the cleric results in the creation of an elemental "dead spot" 1d10 miles in radius centered on the cleric. No spells or abilities from the cleric's own element can be cast, used, or memorized by any clerics within range who worship the same element. The dead spot, which moves with the cleric, lasts for 1d4+1 days.
5	Elemental deluge! For the next 4d4 rounds, the cleric's ability to <i>gate</i> in his element is continually and uncontrollably invoked automatically. The <i>gated</i> element randomly appears within 50' of the cleric's location usually with chaotic effect.
6	Elemental summons: Cleric is summoned to elemental plane and must justify this particular summoning to the elemental powers. After 2d4+5 rounds of questioning, cleric is returned to same place on Athas. Request is either granted or denied based upon the cleric's responses.
7	Spell functions as <i>conjure lesser elemental</i> (75% chance) or <i>conjure elemental</i> (25% chance).
8	3d6+3 mephits*
9	Spell functions but each elemental summoned will have either 1 hp per hit die or 50% of total hit points (50% chance for either).
10	Elemental matter transmutation! Every round, 1d2 random, non-living items within a 20' radius of the cleric must save vs. spell with a -1 penalty or be permanently transformed into an equal volume of the cleric's element. This transmutation continues for 1d10+10 rounds. Transformed items cannot be returned to their previous form by any means short of a <i>wish</i> .
11	Elemental disturbance caused! A nearby drake of any element or para-element arrives in 4d4 rounds and attacks the cleric for daring to disturb the elemental ether by casting annoying spells.
12	Elemental assistant: Cleric is affected by the 8th-level wizard spell <i>homunculus shield</i> for the next 24 hours.
13	Elemental avatar! Cleric is temporarily transformed into a fearful 15' elemental avatar. Cleric is healed of all damage and granted double hit points, fights as a 20 HD monster, strikes with fists twice a round for 5-30 hp of damage, has AC -5 and a magic resistance of 25%. The transformation lasts for only 1 turn after which the cleric reverts to normal but is rendered unconscious for 1d4 hours.
14	A Cleric Elemental of 21st-30th level (advanced being from Dragon Kings possessing the skills of both an elemental cleric and a psionicist) with full spells and psionic abilities appears to fight for cleric.
15	Surprise! Spell functions as quest spell <i>elemental swarm</i> .
16	Roll on Subtable 3 for spectacular elemental spell effect.

Subtable 3: Spectacular major elemental spell effect

Roll 1d4	Result
1	Earth - <i>Glass storm</i> centered on cleric. Air - <i>Sirocco</i> centered on cleric. Fire - <i>Incendiary cloud</i> centered on cleric. Water - <i>Acid storm</i> centered on cleric.
2	Earth - Cleric affected by <i>claws of the umber hulk</i> with no ill effects. Air - <i>Death fog</i> as directed by cleric. Fire - Caster affected by <i>Malec-Keth's flame fist</i> .. Water - <i>Abi-Dalzim's Horrid Wilting</i> as directed by cleric.
3	Earth - Cleric affected by rink. Air - Cleric affected by suffocate. Fire - <i>Delayed blast fireball</i> centered on cleric. Water - <i>Abi-Dalzim's horrid wilting</i> affects cleric.
4	All elements - Protected by an <i>elemental aura</i> for 24 hours.

on the inner planes for help. This is also true for preservers who will opt to cast spells like monster summoning that conjure or summon other beings than elementals. Rangers are more likely to memorize more predictable elemental spells once they have suffered from a few malfunctions.

Summoned elemental beings

If the caster has control over the summoned beings, that control can be stolen by others. If the arriving elemental beings are free-willed, then control can be established provided that someone present possesses the means to enact that control. Free-willed beings cannot be sent back to the elemental planes by voluntarily ending the spell early. Any cleric wishing to send back elementals to their home plane must

find some other means to do so.

Regardless of what beings arrive from the elemental planes, all summoned beings can be returned to their home plane by an appropriate spell, such as banish, with the standard chance of success. The following guidelines outline the behaviors that the elemental beings appearing on the tables will take:

Mephits. Foul, obnoxious mephits associated with the cleric's element appear and attack any character that most appeals to their vulgar sense of taste. If they succeed in killing the character, the mephits quibble over the character's belongings. The mephits cannot return to the planes and are stuck on Athas. The mephits arriving should be: earth, ooze, or mineral for earth clerics; air, mist, smoke, or steam for air clerics; fire, radiant, or smoke for fire clerics; ice,

mist, steam, or water for water clerics. DMs may mix similar types of mephits to enhance the weirdness of the scene. All sixteen varieties of mephits are found in the *PLANESCAPE® MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® Appendix Volume I*.

Elemental vermin. The scavenging elemental vermin that appear spend all their time looking for food to eat. The useless vermin do not fight unless attacked. At the spell's expiration, all surviving vermin return to their home plane. Elemental vermin are listed in the *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM Annual Volume I*.

Elemental beasts. A number of elemental beasts appropriate to the type of *conjure elemental* spell cast are summoned to aid the cleric. Elemental beasts serve the caster to the letter of his commands until the end of the spell's duration. The beasts have no way to travel back to their plane and beseech the cleric for aid in getting home. If the cleric cannot help the beasts, they blame the cleric for their predicament. The beasts may then attack the cleric or follow the cleric around begging for assistance depending on the seriousness of their predicament. Elemental Beasts are detailed in the *DARK SUN MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM Volume II*.

Elemental grues. The vicious grues dislike being summoned but will fight for the cleric upon arriving for fear of angering the elemental powers who sent them to Athas. The temperamental grues are not under the cleric's control and may attack the cleric's companions at the slightest provocation. Upon the spell's expiration, the grues may opt to either return to their home plane or stay on Athas to cause more mayhem. Grues are found in the *PLANESCAPE MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM Volume I*.

Dungeon Masters may substitute other bizarre elemental monsters such as xorn, invisible stalkers, and elemental-kin from the *MONSTROUS MANUAL™* tome and *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM* Annuals as well as world-specific monsters such as law/chaos elementals and fundamentals from the *MYSTARA® MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM Appendix* in place of the elemental beings listed in the tables.

Final notes

The priest quest spell *elemental swarm* never malfunctions. The elemental powers invest a great deal of personal attention and magical energy when bequeathing quest spells. This degree of preparation renders the likelihood of any quest spell malfunction virtually non-existent.

Whenever a malfunction occurs, all players should be confounded and kept in the dark as to the reasons behind a malfunction regardless of whether the effects were good or bad. While the mighty elemental powers may boast when they provide their champion with a beneficial effect, they never admit to any weakness on their behalf when a harmful malfunction occurs. Instead the elemental powers remain silent or blame the para-elemental powers from interfering if questioned by the cleric. DMs can work summoning malfunctions into future adventures by having curious PCs investigate why their spell malfunctioned or punish those believed responsible for the spell malfunction.

The purpose of this article is to add an exotic element of random surprise to the otherwise simple act of elemental summoning on Athas in much the same way that wild magic does in other campaigns. Nothing existing in the *DARK SUN* setting can truly be called predictable or reliable and now the same can be said of elemental summoning on Athas. With these tables, those who would summon elementals are a force to be feared if not dreaded precisely because of these dramatic random effects. Few foes would stay to fight should a deadly acid storm suddenly rain down upon them. Even the cleric's own companions might flee if they watch their friend inexplicably transform into a terrifying, 15' elemental avatar.

These malfunctioning tables need not be limited solely to Athasian campaigns. DMs running other campaigns can easily add these malfunction tables to their games for those characters who summon elementals either by spell or magic item. Either way, DMs now get the chance to bewilder and amaze their players as they bear witness to elemental summoning gone wild!

*Ed Bonny is a great fan of the *DARK SUN* and *PLANESCAPE* settings, as evidenced by his recent articles in the *DRAGON*® Magazine Annual #1 and issue #235, in which he presents *PLAYER'S OPTION*™: Skills & Powers rules for use in those campaigns. Between writing game articles, Ed patrols the subways as one of New York's finest.*

Seldarine

Continued from page 17

erally stick to blue and silver robes, though they're favored for use in everyday situations as well.

Specialty Priests (Tethryls)

REQUIREMENTS: Strength 12, Dexterity 13, Wisdom 13

PRIME REQ.: Strength, Wisdom

ALIGNMENT: NG

WEAPONS: All daggers and swords

ARMOR: Any

MAJOR SPHERES: All, astral, combat, divination, healing, necromantic, protection, sun, war

MINOR SPHERES: Charm, guardian, time, wards

MAGICAL ITEMS: Same as clerics

REQ. PROFS.: Sword (any), spellcraft

BON. PROFS.: Two-weapon style

⊕ Tethryls may choose any particular type of sword as the focus of their training. When using this weapon, they attack with a +1 to hit and damage*. Also, any priests who have the weapon-smithing proficiency receive a +2 bonus on proficiency checks when forging swords or other long, bladed weapons.

⊕ Tethryls may cast a *swordbless* spell 1/day upon any weapon they touch. This is similar to the standard *bless* spell, except that it also makes it so that the

weapon can affect those normally affected only by silver or +1 magical weapons.

⊕ At 3rd level, tethryls may cast a *flameblade* spell, 1/day.

⊕ At 5th level, tethryls may cast *mis-cast magic* 1/day.

⊕ At 7th level, tethryls may cast a *cloak of bravery* spell 1/day.

⊕ At 10th level, tethryls may cast a *dragonbane* spell 1/week.

⊕ At 14th level, tethryls may cast a variant form of *Tenser's transformation* that allows them to use any weapon they're proficient with as their means of attack. This may be done 1/week.

* Note: Those using the *Skills & Powers* optional rules may choose to let tethryns specialize with a single type of sword. If so, the bonuses listed for 1. are nullified and the standard bonuses for specialization apply, including multiple attacks.



Chris Perry likes to think it's his character that endears him to his friends and classmates, but really it's the fact that he wears clean shorts every day. That and his 14 cats.



MYSTICS, SHAMANES, EXORCISTS, 3 PROFICIENCIES, 3 MEDITATIONS

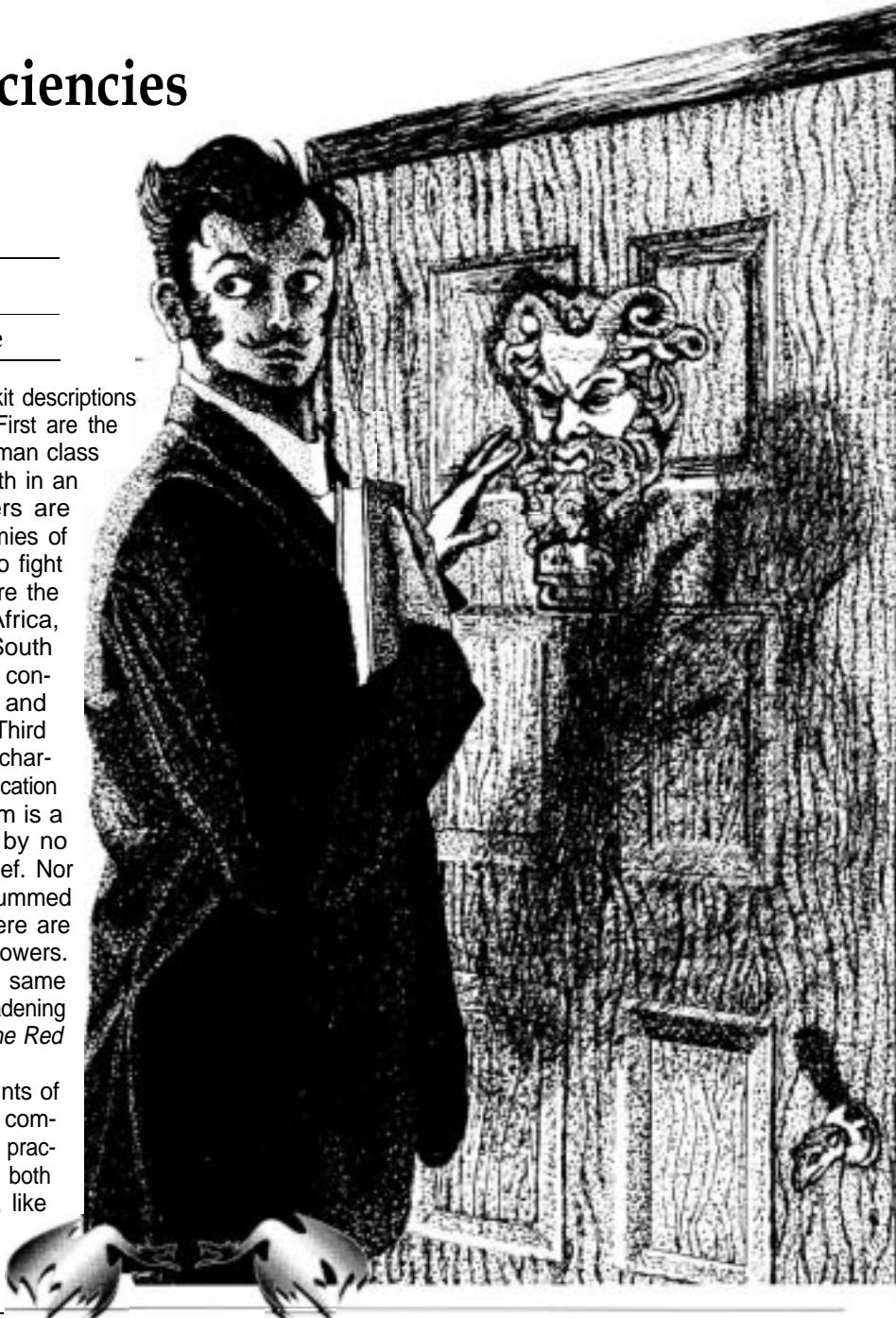
New kits and proficiencies for Gothic Earth mystics

by James Wyatt

illustrated by Valerie Valles

The *Masque of the Red Death* rules contain kit descriptions for three basic kinds of religious professionals. First are the very ordinary parsons, members of the tradesman class who derive great strength of will from their faith in an established world religion. These characters are described as being "among the greatest enemies of the Red Death," moved by their strong faith to fight against the power of evil in the world. Next are the shamans, leaders in the tribal religions of Africa, Australia, and the natives of North and South America. As mystics, these characters live in constant awareness of the world of the spirits, and derive magical power from that awareness. Third are the spiritualists and mediums, also mystic characters, who practice spiritualism and communication with the spirits of the dead. While spiritualism is a major part of religion in Gothic Earth, it is by no means the only manifestation of religious belief. Nor can the varieties of religious expression be summed up in the parson and shaman kits. In fact, there are certain other religious figures with mystical powers. The kits described in this article, following the same format as those in *A Guide to Gothic Earth*, broadening the field for clerical characters in the *Masque of the Red Death* setting.

Exorcist characters have studied vast amounts of lore concerning evil spirits and techniques of commanding and dispelling them, while Enthusiasts practice what is called "faith healing." Characters of both kits are generally members of world religions, like



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Exorcist

Class:	Mystic
Ability Requirements:	Wis 15, Con 12
Prime Requisite:	Wisdom
Hit Die:	d8
Attack as:	Mystic
Save as:	mystic
Advance as:	Mystic
Exc. Strength?	No
Spell Ability?	As mystic
Exc. Constitution?	No
Starting Cash:	2d4
Proficiencies	
Weapon Slots:	2
Additional Slot:	5



Nonproficiency Penalty: -4

Nonweapon Slots: 5

Additional Slot: 3

Available Categories: General,

arcane

Religion

Bonus Proficiency:

Recommended

Proficiencies:

Forbidden

lore, sixth

sense

Description: Exorcists are religious specialists who are trained and empowered to banish evil spirits. Unlike most religious figures on Gothic Earth, exorcists do have spiritual powers (mystic spells) to help them in their spiritual warfare against evil.

Through elaborate rites that may include dancing, drumming, beating a possessed person on the soles of the feet, liberal use of holy water, or many other means, the exorcist hopes to drive away the spiritual forces of the Red Death, preventing them from causing harm to the bodies and souls of humanity. Specific creatures that exorcists are particularly effective in combatting include ghosts, haunts, odems, carionettes, ghostlights, even fiends (in some campaigns), as well as other monsters capable of dominating or possessing their victims. They also have heightened powers against all forms of undead.

Roleplaying: Exorcists are serious about their work and very devoted to their religion. Not all of them are

dour and grim, but most are. Their determination to combat the forces of evil in the world — along with their special abilities to do so — more than makes up for their lack of humor.

Generally, exorcists have completed many years of training to learn their skills and perfect their devotion. Most exorcists should be at least middle-aged.

Special benefits: Exorcists turn undead as if they were 1 level higher than their actual level. Since Exorcists derive their mystical powers from a source of good, they are less likely to attract the attention of the Red Death with their spellcasting. In most cases, the chance of failing a powers check is half what it would normally be — i.e., one-half the spell's level (round up) or, in the case of a spell from the Necromantic sphere, the spell's level. The exception to this rule is described under special hindrances, below.

Special hindrances: The next sphere learned by an exorcist after mastering or abandoning the sphere of All must be Protection. Exorcists must be Lawful Good. As mentioned above, Exorcists are not as susceptible as most characters to the evil influence of the Red Death in their spellcasting. However, if an Exorcist does betray his or her faith by using a spell for evil purposes, the chance of failing the powers check is twice what it would normally be — double the spell's level, or quadruple the level of a Necromantic spell. Similarly, if an Exorcist is ever required to make a powers check because of an evil act such as theft or murder, the chance of failure is doubled.

Enthusiast

Class:	Mystic
Ability Requirements:	Charisma 14
Prime Requisite:	Wisdom
Hit Die:	d8
Attack as:	Tradesman
Save as:	Mystic
Advance as:	Mystic
Exc. Strength?	No
Spell Ability?	As mystic
Exc. Constitution?	No
Starting Cash:	2d6
Proficiencies	
Weapon Slots:	2
Additional Slot:	5
Nonproficiency Penalty:	-4
Nonweapon Slots:	5
Additional Slot:	3
Available Categories:	General, Professional, Religion
Bonus Proficiency:	
Recommended Proficiencies:	Singing, Savoir-faire, a trade

Description: Enthusiasts are preachers first and foremost, powerful and persuasive speakers who are also capable of working miracles of healing as a result of their faith. They are often important opponents of the Red Death, fighting the forces of evil through their healing powers. Enthusiasts have a special interest in battling minions of the Red Death that feed on the life-force of their human victims, such as vampires and other level-draining undead, midnight cats, kizoku, sympathetics, and the like.

Roleplaying: Enthusiasts are strongly committed to their faith. They may be missionaries, traveling revivalists, or local preachers, but in any case their lives are dedicated to their religion. They rarely miss an opportunity to talk to others about it, and often use their healing powers to impress others with the power of faith, hoping to win converts by that means.

Note that, unlike exorcists, enthusiasts are as susceptible as other spellcasters to the powers of the Red Death.

Special benefits: The enthusiast begins with minor access to the All and Healing spheres. When addressing a group of humans who are not predominantly scientists or other persons steeped in the worldview of modern science (see special hindrances, below), the enthusiast can attempt to influence the mood of the crowd. This is handled exactly as a bard's Influence Reactions ability.

Special hindrances: The enthusiast can never gain major access to the All sphere. Scientists and other persons steeped in a "modernist" worldview (including spiritualists and metaphysicians) look down on the enthusiast's fervent religious faith; in dealing with such characters, the enthusiast receives a -2 reaction penalty. Science is always trying to prove that the "miracles" (spell ability) of the enthusiast are in fact parlor tricks or elaborate hoaxes.

Priestly proficiencies

The four new nonweapon proficiencies described below are especially appropriate for mystic characters belonging to one of the kits described above, as well as mystics using the kits in *A Guide to Gothic Earth*. They belong to the Arcane group and can be learned by any character with access to that group. They can also be easily adapted to almost any other AD&D® campaign.

Hierarchy contact. Characters with positions in established church hierar-

Table 1: New proficiency summary

Proficiency	Slots	Ability	Mod.
Hierarchy contact	2	Cha	-2
Meditation	1	Wis	-1
Movement meditation	1	Wis	-2
Presence	2	Cha	0

chies or other organized religions may have access to resources unavailable to other characters. This proficiency reflects such resources, and indicates that the character knows how to work within his or her hierarchy to get information and other supplies an adventuring party may need. In Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Abraham Van Helsing uses holy wafers in a putty to seal the tomb of Lucy Westenra. He could do this because, as he says, "I have an Indulgence." (Of course, *A Gothic Earth Gazetteer* notes that Van Helsing is "a very close friend" of Pope Leo XIII. No such close relationship is implied in this proficiency!)

This proficiency may be used to gather information about a specific place, person, or object. This use of the proficiency is much like consulting a sage, as described in the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*. No proficiency check is required for the character, just a normal success roll for the "sage."

Monetary resources are not required, but the character must have access to modern means of communication — either telegraph or mail systems. Especially in the latter case, information can be significantly delayed in transit. The fields of study to which the character's contact has access are somewhat limited, at the DM's discretion.

A successful proficiency check gives the character access to consecrated or otherwise special items which may be useful in battling the supernatural. This use of the proficiency is entirely at the DM's discretion, but may provide holy water, blessed weapons, holy wafers or their equivalent, or other such items.

Meditation. Most religious professionals are trained in various practices of spiritual discipline and meditation. In addition to the effects that these practices have upon the soul of the meditator, they have more concrete physical and mental effects as well. By spending time in meditation and prayer and making a successful proficiency check, the character can temporarily boost one mental ability score — Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma — by +2. The effect lasts one-third of the time spent in meditation, so if the character spent

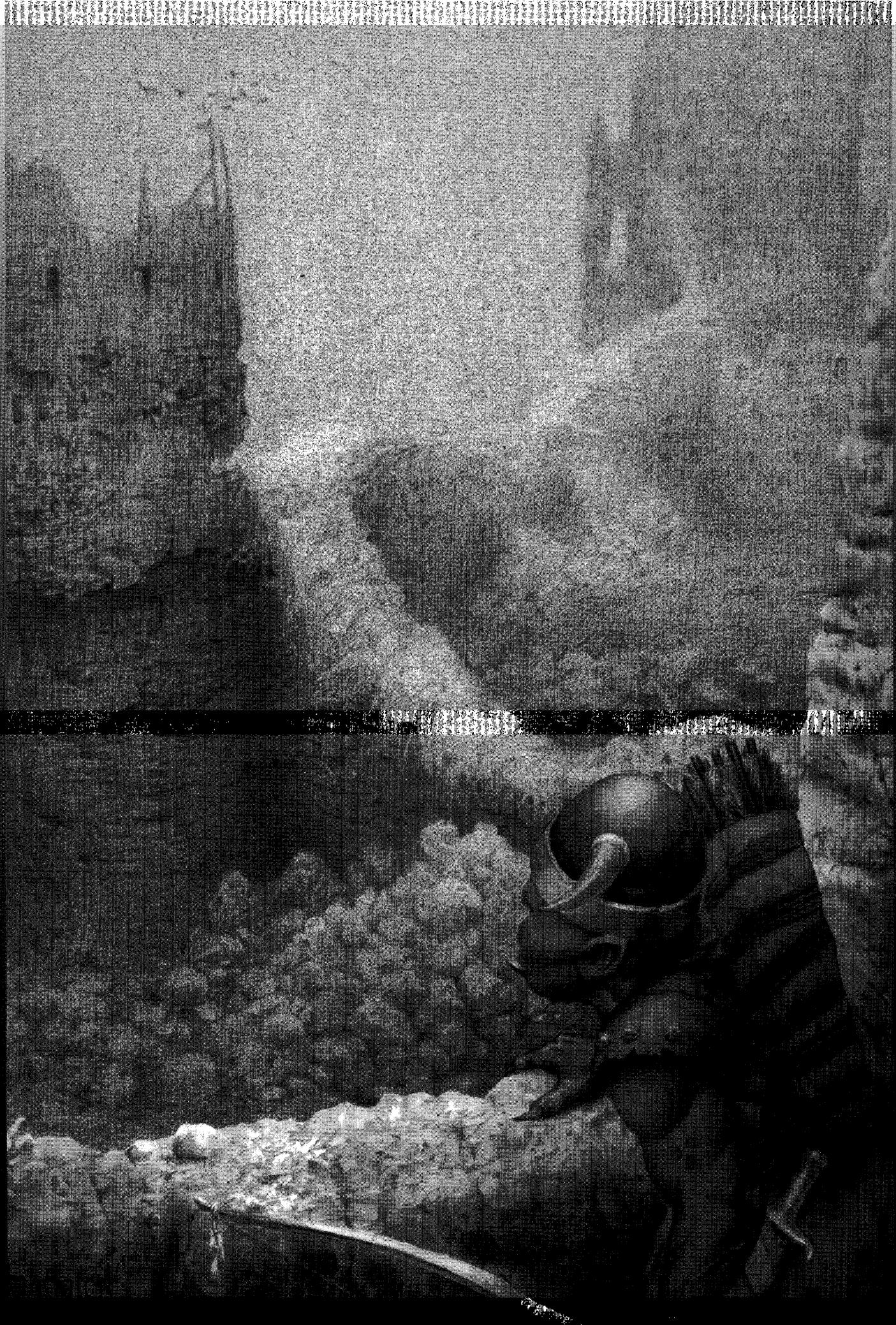
three uninterrupted hours in meditation, the ability score would remain heightened for one hour. Meditation requires freedom from disturbance, and does not eliminate the needs for food, drink, or sleep. Only one ability can be boosted at any given time. (Note: This proficiency is derived from the special ability of the mystic kit in the *PLAYER'S OPTIONAL™: Skills & Powers* book.)

Movement meditation. Certain mystical traditions in Gothic Earth, particularly (but not exclusively) in the East, emphasize physical discipline and exercise as means of spiritual growth. This proficiency is identical to the Meditation proficiency described above, except that one physical ability — Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution — can be improved by +1 for a period equal to half the time spent in meditation.

Presence. Some characters have such spiritual power that their auras are almost tangible, easily detected by others and, particularly, by supernatural creatures. On a successful proficiency check, the character can shift the reaction of a supernatural creature by one level towards the low end of the chart — so that a hostile result becomes threatening, a threatening result becomes cautious, and a cautious result becomes friendly or flight.



James Wyatt is an ordained minister enjoying a leave of absence in Madison, Wisconsin. He's working as a technical writer and multimedia guru, getting used to a much smaller house, and (with his wife, Amy) eagerly anticipating the birth of his first child in February.





by Ed Stark

illustrated by Bob Klasnich

Duke Kort Adler of Wierech stood facing west. Even five hundred feet up, at the top of his tower, he could see distinctly the different armies below him. The bitter cold of the Gorgons sorcerous wind ripped through him, but he could not abandon his post. His family, holed up in the same tower, was as safe as he could make it.

That is to say, not at all.

The tower shuddered. The undead had breached the outer wall before daybreak, and giant beasts brought battering rams and siege engines to assault. Those of his loyal knights who still survived tried to repulse them from the lower parapets, but to no avail. No matter how many they killed, the Gorgon's forces still came on. Now, they fought the Urga-Zai, and they died.

The tower shuddered again. A giant stone fell from the wall near the Duke. Grimly, he smiled. It could not help but crush a half-dozen goblins or orogs when it landed. Perhaps, he thought, it might destroy one of the giants working the ram. A small victory, but that was all the Duke of Wierech had left.

More stones fell. The cries of the goblins and the screams of prisoners carried up to the Dukes ears. He knew the Gorgons sorceries brought the screams to this height, but that did not make them less real. The Duke knew his pride had brought this upon him. He only hoped that his youngest son, sent to the coast only a week before, had made it out of the Gorgons clutches. Otherwise, the realm of Wierech would fall with him.

As if his thoughts were a catalyst, the tower shook one more time and began to sway. The Duke gripped the walls, but knew the outcome. He cursed the Gorgon as he fell, and his great tower toppled into a flaming ruin amid the icy stone.

The Fortress of Adlersburg had fallen.

Set between the mountains of Wierech, the Fortress of Adlersburg once watched over the Gorgon's Crown, one of the most evil realms on Cerilia. Its architect, the Duke of Wierech, hoped to contain the evil of the Gorgon and prevent it from infecting his realm. But his proud fortress only goaded the immortal awnshegh into testing, and then destroying, his would-be watcher. The fall of Adlersburg presaged one of the greatest debacles in the history of Brechtür. Many of the realms of the Western Reaches have yet to fully recover from the Gorgon's "lesson" to the proud Duke.

Today, Adlersburg is a haunted ruin. In the weeks after the death of Duke Kort Adler and the slaughter of his armies, the Gorgon over-ran Wierech and most of the neighboring realms of the region. Only the timely intervention of Müden, Danigau, and some remaining Anuirean forces kept him from conquering a large portion of the Western Reaches entirely. As it was, the Brechts and their allies paid a great price to drive the Gorgon's forces entirely from Wierech, and the Ruin of Adlersburg has never been completely free of evil.

The haunting of Adlersburg

Many evils still haunt the Ruin of Adlersburg, but the sting to ancient pride is the worst. Ever since the great Fortress fell to the Gorgon's armies, the ruler of Adlersburg (a Duchess or Duke descended from the architect of the Fortress) has not been able to build or maintain a decent army or castle in the region. Wierech's morale, as a military nation, still suffers from the humiliating defeat — and, perhaps, a curse.

Goblins, gnolls, orogs, and evil men find refuge in Adlersburg. Even though the Duke of Wierech rules the province of Adler and the military-minded priests of Kirche's Tundarr maintain a presence in the region, they cannot free the old Fortress of evil.

The living evil

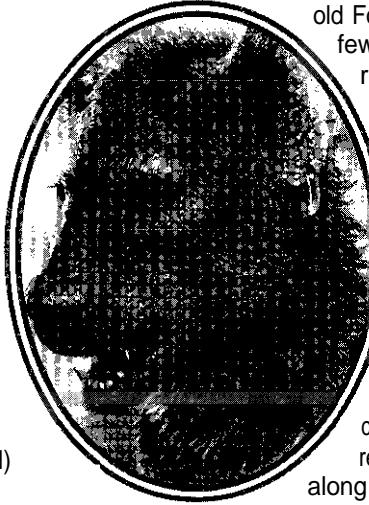
In truth, the humanoids and evil men of Adlersburg do not live in the Fortress proper. They fear the ancient curse of Adlersburg as well, but dare to come closer than most in their desperation. They reside here against the hope of the current Duke of Wierech, and against the orders of the Gorgon. Most are refugees from either nation — humanoids who escaped the Gorgon's armies just ahead of the whip, and humans who fled Brechtür justice in Wierech, Dauren, or Danigau.

All told, nearly two hundred humanoids and evil humans make their home here [enough for about 1 Mercenary Infantry unit, using the **BIRTHRIGHT®** war card rules], but they will not unite for anything but a life-or-death reason. In general, they hang together in small bands of 10 to 30 members. The bands are better equipped than most raiders — rumor has it that the Urga-Zai goblins have been known to send them gear and weapons from time to time.

Gorag Muleskinner

5th-level Gnoll fighter

S:	18/93
D:	10
C:	16
I:	11
W:	9
Ch:	5/13
AL:	CE
AC:	2
hp:	34
MV:	9
THAC0:	16
#AT:	1
Dmg:	1d10 (halberd)



Equipment: Improved mail +1, ring of protection +1, halberd, 200 gp, javelins (6).

Description/History: Gorag is the latest in a series of dominant bandits occupying the outskirts of Adlersburg. He commands the largest, best-organized band of humanoids and evil men in the region and would likely be the whole group's leader if it came to a battle with outside forces.

Gorag is tall, even for a gnoll (nearly 8½' tall) and wields his halberd like a toy. Extremely dangerous in combat, the black-furred gnoll still managed to accumulate a number of bright red scars, the most prominent of which cuts across the top of his nose. Rumor has it that he gained these marks at the hands of the Gorgon's torturers, when he tried to form his own band of gnolls with the Gorgon's Crown. Now, he leads his bandits with almost military efficiency.

Gorag desires to loot the buried chambers beneath the ruined Tower of the Duke. He does not believe in the "curse of Adlersburg," but his men do. He must either achieve some substantial victories to impress them or find some other means of excavating the area.

Gorag's Bandits, male or female, human or humanoid, F2 (20-40): AC 5 (scale mail and shield); MV 9 (lightly encumbered); HD 2; hp 12; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 or 1d6 (long sword or long bow); SZ M (5' to 8' tall); ML steady (12); INT average (9); AL NE; XP 65 each.

Gorag's followers are exceptional humans, goblins, gnolls, and orogs. They can be armed with any weapons, but Gorag has trained 50% of them with the long bow. Gorag may have a 4th-level lieutenant among them.

The undead terrors

The bandits shun the interior of the old Fortress for a very good reason. A few months after the Gorgon overran and plundered most of the Fortress, he ordered his armies to excavate and loot the sub-levels of the Tower of the Duke. Small foraging units organized and the digging began.

It did not last long.

Within a few hours, goblins and gnolls fled the area screaming, and no amount of whipping or killing by their commanders could get them to return to their duties. Fresh troops, along with armed guards, were sent in, and many died of terror and horrible wounds before they finally retreated.

By this time, the armies of the Brechts had driven back most of the Gorgon's over-extended armies in the region. He did not wish to give up all his advantage over some minor human treasures, so he ordered his armies to stop pillaging and defend the Ruin of Adlersburg. Eventually, the Brechts drove them out, and then they themselves left the area without disturbing the dead.

Legends speak of the Knights of Adlersburg and the Royal Guard who died defending the Tower of the Duke at the very last. Put to death in cruel and horrible ways, these valiant men and women have been transformed into terrible undead, seeking vengeance on their tormentors.

All manner of undead roam the Ruins. Lesser undead, such as zombies and skeletons, number in the dozens. They arise only on special occasions, however — the anniversary of Adlersburg's fall, perhaps, or when the Tower sub-levels are disturbed. Many of these creatures have been laid to rest permanently over the years, but many more still exist.

Greater undead inhabit the sub-levels of the Tower and some of the remaining Fortress structures. Haunts appear to be the most common in the outer regions. They hope to possess any available bodies and trek to the Gorgon's Crown, there to fight against the awnshegh's forces. Some say the haunts are all that remain of the Speckled Guard, one of the Knights' most prominent regiments. No more than a dozen haunts still lurk among the Ruins.

Phantoms exist in the upper Tower sub-levels. They drove the pillaging

armies of the Gorgon out of the Tower once before and seek to keep the area inviolate from bandits, treasure hunters, and explorers. At least five to ten phantoms haunt the first sub-level of the Tower, still experiencing the tortures of the Gorgon and the last, painful moments of their lives. Once, these men and women served the Duke of Wierch as his personal servants and guards. Now, they protect the Tower through eternity.

No one knows what other horrible undead may lurk in the lower levels, since no reliable explorer has made it past the phantoms. Some say wights, sent by the Gorgon, patrol the lower halls, to keep anyone from plundering the Tower before him. Other, more terrifying creatures may exist here as well — though no reliable information exists.

The ghost of Adlersburg

Virtually every bard who sings of the Fall of Adlersburg ends his story with the tale of the Anniversary Night and the Ghost of Adlersburg. Every year, it is said, on the same night that the Gorgon hurled his sorcerous blizzard and his hordes of undead at Adlersburg, the battle is reenacted on the spirit plane. Those who enter the ruin of the Fortress proper can see the Tower still standing, in flames amid the snow, and can hear the cries of the dying as the final assault begins. The battle culminates, as always, with the fall of the Tower and the death of the Duke.

On these nights, some legends say, a true warrior of Wierch may bypass the phantoms and the haunts of the Tower region and enter the ghostly structure before it falls. The warrior may have to undergo tests to prove his true heart. He may be tempted by treasures, threatened by illusions, or actually have to fight evil undead. The Gorgon's minions, the wights and other creatures, will certainly try to stop him.

But, if the hero reaches the top of the Tower alive, he can confront the Duke of Wierch's ghost. The ghost's power may or may not affect the hero (depending on how successful he was in passing the aforementioned tests), but the hero can try to persuade the undead Duke to allow him to search the ruins underneath the Tower for magic or treasure that could aid the people of Wierch. If the Duke is convinced, he will call off his haunts and phantoms (the other undead are beyond his control). The Duke may require the hero to perform an additional quest of



some sort if he is not overly impressed, and he may reject the suit outright.

Raising the curse

No one knows how many sub-levels may exist in the Ruins of Adlersburg, or what monsters or undead may guard them. Gaining the permission of the ghost of the old Duke might make entering the underground levels possible, but the adventure begins there. In order to raise the Curse of Adlersburg and put the undead to rest permanently, the PCs must accomplish any number of goals, none of which should be clearly defined. Any of the following goals may be required:

◆ Vanquish or dispel all evil undead in the ruins.

◆ Rid the area of evil humanoids and humans.

◆ Recover the Duke's sword, *Giantslayer*, a magical weapon with great powers and, perhaps, a powerful intelligence.

◆ Recover the bodies of the Duke's family, crushed and buried when the Tower fell.

◆ Recover the eye of Adlersburg, a magical talisman to the Gorgon's Crown

and place it within sight of his tower. (The true regent of Wierech can look through the eye of Adlersburg and see anything within a one hundred yard radius of the eye if it is properly planted).

The DM may also create other goals for would-be heroes to perform. None should be easily accomplished, and many lead to other adventures that could keep a hero adventuring in and around the Ruin of Adlersburg for quite some time.

The treasure of Adlersburg

No one knows exactly what treasures lie buried beneath the Tower of Adlersburg. Protected by undead and, possibly, powerful spells and traps, the treasury of the former capital of Wierech has lain undisturbed for centuries. Some possible treasures include:

◆ More than 10,000 gp (5 Gold Bars) in money and jewelry;

◆ The weapons and armor of the household guard (enough to equip a unit — about 200 men and women — of infantry or elite infantry);

◆ Magical treasures including the eye of Adlersburg, the sword *Giantslayer*, and other legendary items (miscellaneous

magical items considered rare and powerful on Cerilia); and

◆ An ancient library of knowledge assembled by the long-dead Wizard of Two Giants' Tread and several former priests of Kirche (includes 1d6 realm spells, 2d4 battle spells, and 4d6 conventional spells that may have been lost to Cerilian knowledge before now).

After his design work on the BIRTHRIGHT campaign expansion Havens of the Great Bay, Ed Stark's experience writing about pirates and other rogues has gone to his head. The recent re-design of his facial hair has earned him the nickname "Mr. Evil-Beard" among certain members of the magazine staff.

ARCANE



Demihuman priest spells

by Robert S. Mullin

illustrated by Terry Dykstra

Is it my imagination, or did demihuman priests get the short end of the stick with regards to specialty spells? Well, if you too have made this observation, suffer no more. Detailed below are a handful specialty priest spells for each of the four primary demihuman races: dwarves, elves, gnomes, and halflings.

Dwarven Priest Spells

Weapon of the Earth

(Alteration)

Sphere: Elemental (earth)

Level: 1

Range: Touch

Components: V,S,M

Duration: 1 round/level

Casting Time: 1

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: None

Available to all dwarven priesthoods, this spell allows the caster to transform a normal chunk of stone into a weapon. The weapon is always the same as the weapon associated with cleric's deity (i.e., hammers with Moradin, battle axes with Clanggedin, etc.). However, the affected stone must be of a volume relative to the weapon type it will assume; the spell fails if the amount of available stone is less than the volume of the desired weapon.

Despite being made out of stone, the weapon inflicts normal damage for its kind. Of course, its stone composition makes it immune to metal-affecting magic and conditions like rust and corrosion, *heat metal* and *crystalbrittle* spells, etc. On the other hand, the weapon is susceptible to stone-affecting spells, such as stone to *flesh*, *transmute rock to*

mud, and the like. In any case, the weapon is considered magical for purposes of determining what creatures it can hit, but it provides no additional attack or damage bonuses.

When the spell expires, the weapon returns to its normal form. *Dispel magic* and similar effects can make the weapon revert to a normal stone early if cast successfully.

The material components for this spell are the cleric's holy symbol, the stone to be turned into a weapon, and a small chunk of iron ore. Only the iron is consumed in the casting.

Mark of Brotherhood

(Alteration)

Sphere: All

Level: 2

Range: Touch

Components: V,S,M

Duration: Permanent

Casting Time: 1 turn

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: None

Available to all dwarven priests, this spell places a magical glyph on each of the recipient's hands. The symbol varies according to the priest's religion and clan, marking one of the recipient's hands with the priest's clan insignia and the other hand with the symbol of the priest's deity. Once in place, the mark of brotherhood becomes invisible. Thereafter, only those who possess an identical mark of brotherhood are able to see it, magical detection notwithstanding.

A mark of brotherhood is a permanent fixture unless the recipient commits some offense against the clan or religion

associated with the spell, be it physical harm, political sabotage, or the like. If such an act is committed, the mark of brotherhood flares with the light of molten steel, searing the recipient's hands for 2 hp damage per level of the casting priest (at the time the spell was cast), and leaving behind visible scars from the ordeal. Note that this damage is derived from pure divine energy, and immunity to fire or heat will not protect the victim. Furthermore, while the inflicted damage can be healed, the scars are permanent, resisting spells like *heal*, *regeneration*, even a *wish*, and penetrating magical disguises including shape-shifting powers and illusions. Only after the victim has made amends for his crime (usually involving a quest on behalf of the offended party) can the scars be removed. In any case, the mark of brotherhood is negated if so triggered.

The purpose of this spell is to allow recipients to recognize one another and know who their friends are. It also serves to vindicate recipients who are falsely accused of some transgression against the clan or religion. If the charges were accurate, the defendant would bear the scars as proof.

The material component is a special steel coin bearing the priest's clan insignia on one side and the symbol of his deity on the other. Still hot from the forge, this symbol is clasped between the palms of the recipient (inflicting 1d4 hp damage) and the spell is cast. While the component appears to be absorbed into the recipient's flesh, it is actually consumed when the priest touches the subject.

(Note: This spell is typically reserved for dwarves, but it is occasionally bestowed upon other races who have performed some great service on behalf of the dwarves.)

Abbathor's Greed

(Divination)

Sphere: Divination

Level: 3

Range: 10 yards/level

Components: V,S

Duration: Instantaneous

Casting Time: 3

Area of Effect: 10'-path

Saving Throw: None

As its name suggests, this spell is granted only to the malign priesthood of Abbathor.

The priest who casts this spell can determine the single most valuable item within the spell's range and area of

effect. Note, however, that the information gained through this spell involves an item's monetary value only; it does not detect magical auras, so magical items are only as valuable as the materials from which they are made. In any case, the caster learns the exact value (in terms of gold pieces) of the item.

The use of this spell is not without risks. For every 1,000 gp value of the item detected with this spell, there is a 1% cumulative chance that Abbathor himself takes notice of the item and desires it for himself. If this occurs, there is an equal chance that Abbathor sends an avatar to retrieve the object. Obviously, a priest of Abbathor would be wise not to resist the avatar's claim on the item in question.

Note: Under no circumstances does the avatar become involved in the daily affairs of the priest or those around him. Its sole purpose is to retrieve the desired item and return with it to Abbathor's plane. Any attempt to prevent the avatar from carrying out its duty is dealt with accordingly.

Crypt Ward

(Abjuration, Enchantment/Charm)

Reversible

Sphere: Guardian

Level: 4

Range: Special

Components: V,S,M

Duration: Permanent

Casting Time: 1 hour

Area of Effect: 100 square feet

Saving Throw: None

This spell is available to priests of all dwarven religions, but its use is typically reserved for the priests of Dumathoin, who are generally regarded as the "keepers of the dead."

This spell is cast over a dwarven tomb or crypt. If the tomb is larger than the spell's area of effect, additional castings can ensure that the entire crypt complex benefits from the spell. Otherwise, the spell is effective only within its 100-square-foot area.

Once the *crypt ward* is in place, it causes the dwarven remains interred therein to animate temporarily in order to protect the tomb from grave robbers. Whenever an intruder enters the spell's area of effect, the dwarven bones contained therein rise up and attack. The animated dwarves attack as fighters equal to one-third of the caster's level at the time the *crypt ward* was set up (fractions dropped), and possess 5 hp per level. Thus, a *crypt ward* cast by a 12th-



level priest will produce 4th-level dwarves who possess 20 hp each. Note, however, that the animated dwarves are not actual undead creatures; the effect is similar to how wizards animate weapons with the *enchanted weapon* spell. Also note that the dwarves will not animate and attack other dwarves, so long as the visiting dwarves are not attempting to plunder the tomb. Other races are not so fortunate if not accompanied by a dwarf.

In any case, the dwarves animated by this spell cannot leave the spell's area of effect. If intruders flee that area, the dwarves return to their resting places until the next intrusion. If the animated dwarves are "slain," it should be assumed that their remains have been destroyed.

Dispel magic cannot negate a *crypt ward*, but a *limited wish*, *wish*, or *remove crypt ward* can, as does the destruction of the tomb complex itself.

The reverse of this spell, *remove crypt ward*, enables the caster to negate a *crypt ward*. In most dwarven enclaves, *remove crypt ward* is reserved for those rare times when the dwarven remains must be transported to a new site. Note, however, that the priest attempting to remove the *crypt ward* must be of equal or greater level than the caster of the *crypt ward* when the spell was set in place.

It is said that the dwarven priests of old were far stronger than those of today, so it is likely that, in truly ancient dwarven strongholds, there are *crypt wards* that cannot be removed by modern priests.

The material components for both versions of this spell are the caster's holy symbol and the ritual sacrifice of 10,000 gp worth of precious metals and minerals.

Berronar's Favor

(Conjuration/Summoning)

Sphere: Summoning

Level: 5

Range: Special

Components: V,S,M

Duration: Instantaneous

Casting Time: 1 hour

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: Special

As might be expected, this spell may be cast only by priests of Berronar Truesilver.

When dwarven enclaves fall on hard economical times, this spell can be used to help put the community back on its feet. When cast, the spell summons a lock of Berronar's hair, which turns into gold within 24 hours after its arrival. The golden lock is worth between 2,000-8,000 gp. It does not radiate magic, nor can it be dispelled or negated.

Despite the usefulness of this spell, it has two important restrictions:

First, the spell must be cast on behalf of a suffering dwarven enclave, and the acquired gold must be used to help the enclave through its difficult times. If the gold is used for any other purpose, especially an evil or selfish purpose (e.g., personal gain), the gold is forfeit and vanishes immediately.

Second, the caster must be Berronar's high priest in the enclave, and of lawful good alignment.

If these conditions are not met, Berronar simply refuses to grant the spell. Obviously, Berronar's adventuring priests are unlikely to receive this spell while away from their enclave.

The material component for this spell is the caster's holy symbol. The casting time accounts for other factors in the spell's casting, such as prayer, meditation, and the like.

Elven Priest Spells

Animal Animosity

(Alteration)

Sphere: Animal
Level: 1
Range: 10 yards/level
Components: V,S
Duration: 1 day/level
Casting Time: 1 round
Area of Effect: One creature
Saving Throw: Negates

The use of this spell is the province of Rillifane Rallathil, and those who have been subject to it often refer to it as Rillifane's Curse.

When this spell is cast, a single creature (determined by the priest during casting) within range must save vs. spell. If the save is made, the spell does not take effect and is wasted. If the save is failed, however, the victim produces an aura that causes all animals within 50' to react in a hostile fashion toward him. Thus, animals that are normally aggressive and temperamental will instantly attack the victim, while normally passive animals will react to moderately dangerous situations as if they were trapped in a corner or protecting young. (DMs should adjust a given animal's morale by 5 points to determine whether or not it feels threatened enough to attack.) Only those animals that can be influenced by an *animal friendship* spell becomes hostile toward the victim.

This spell does not function at its full potential if cast upon rangers or other beings who possess a natural ability that allows them to alter an animal's disposi-

tion. This spell simply prevents such beings from changing the animal's emotional state, but the animal does not become more hostile toward the victim. Basically, the spell and the natural ability effectively cancel out one other for the duration of the spell.

Similarly, spells that allow a caster to influence animals (e.g., *animal friendship*, *charm person* or *mammal*, etc.) will automatically fail when cast by a victim of this spell.

Animal animosity lasts for the full duration of the spell, unless removed with a *remove curse*, *dispel magic*, or a more potent spell.

Faith Arrow (Enchantment/Charm)

Sphere: Combat
Level: 2
Range: Touch
Components: V,S,M
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 1 round
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: None

Despite its sphere, this spell is available to most elven priesthoods, but it is usually associated with the priests of Corellon Larethian, Solonor Thelandira, and Rillifane Rallathil (due to the archery aspects of those deities).

This spell allows the caster to enchant a number of nonmagical arrows (magical arrows are not affected by the spell), "charging" them with divine power. The caster is not required to use the arrows himself; he may give them to other archers as desired.

When let fly, a *faith arrow* always strikes its target, so long as the target is within bow range and the archer's line of sight. A *faith arrow* cannot pass through any barrier that a normal arrow cannot penetrate, though it can follow a target around corners, through open doors, etc. Also, the missile inflicts maximum damage upon its target. If the faith arrow passes into or through an *anti-magic shell*, dead magic zone, or similar area, the unerring accuracy and maximum damage of the *faith arrow* is lost. Instead, normal attack and damage rolls are required (with a +4 to hit). Otherwise, the arrow is considered a magical weapon for purposes of determining what creatures can be hit by it.

A priest may create one *faith arrow* for every three levels of experience he possesses (i.e., a 12th-level priest may create four *faith arrows*), but there cannot be more than six *faith arrows* of the

caster's creation in existence at one time. Also, a *faith arrow* retains its enchantment until used, at which time it crumbles to dust.

In addition to the caster's holy symbol, the material component for this spell is the arrow(s) to be enchanted, which must have been made by an expert fletcher.

Probe Enemies

(Divination)

Sphere: Divination
Level: 3
Range: 10 yards/level
Components: V,S
Duration: 1 round
Casting Time: 1 round
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: None

This spell is available only to the priests of Corellon Larethian.

When *probe enemies* is cast, all hostile entities within the spell's range, and in the priest's line of sight, are probed by the spell's magic. While the duration lasts, the caster must maintain concentration; if the caster is distracted (i.e., suffers damage, casts another spell, initiates melee, etc.), the spell fails, and no information is learned. Once the duration has run its course, however, the caster will know which opponent is the most powerful, or which foe poses the greatest threat to the priest, if no single enemy can be regarded as more powerful than any other. Note, however, that the spell does not tell the caster why or what makes a given creature more powerful than another, only that it is more powerful in some way.

While this spell offers no saving throw to those it inspects, magic resistance still applies, as do magical effects that impede the effectiveness of Divination magic (e.g., *amulet of proof against detection and location*). In such instances, the *probe enemies* spell will choose the most powerful opponent who is not so obscured.

Assume Gaseous Form

(Alteration)

Sphere: Elemental (air)
Level: 4
Range: 0
Components: V,S,M
Duration: 1 turn/level
Casting Time: 1 round
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: None

This spell is granted only to the priesthood of Aerrie Faenya. When

cast, this spell causes the caster and all of his belongings (which must be held or carried) to assume a gaseous state, not unlike the effects produced by a *potion of gaseous form*. The change takes a full round to occur, and during this time the caster cannot perform any other actions, as intense concentration is required until the transformation is complete. As the change takes place, the caster is virtually helpless, and if he suffers physical damage or is otherwise prevented from maintaining concentration, the spell is foiled, and the caster immediately reverts to his actual form. Once the transformation is complete, concentration is no longer required.

While in gaseous form, the priest gains all of the abilities inherent to such a state. He may pass through the tiniest cracks and openings, avoid damage from physical blows, blend with other vapors, and so forth. However, the caster must also bear the drawbacks of such magic: verbal communication is impossible, base movement rate is 3 (which is further reduced, or negated entirely, by strong wind), vulnerability to exceptionally powerful winds, susceptibility to fire, and so forth.

Once the spell is cast, it must run its course; the caster cannot revert to his true form until the duration expires. However, a successful *dispel magic* can force the spell to end early. During a forced change (which also takes a full round), the caster's body is racked with severe pain and convulsions, which continues for 2-5 rounds after the reversion is complete. During this time, the caster cannot cast spells, fight, or even communicate properly. Opponents gain a +4 bonus to hit when attacking the convulsing caster. Note that a *cure light wounds* or more powerful healing magic will end the pain and convulsions immediately, allowing the recipient to act normally thereafter.

The material component for this spell is the priest's holy symbol.

Faerie Flames (Alteration)

Sphere: Combat, elemental (fire), weather

Level: 5

Range: 80 yards

Components: V,M

Duration: 4 rounds/level

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: 10' square/level within a 40' radius

Saving Throw: 1/2

Available to all elven priesthoods, this spell is a variant of the first level



priest spell *faerie fire*. Except as noted here, this spell conforms to the characteristics of the lesser spell.

In addition to the usual effects inherent to a *faerie fire* spell, this spell inflicts fiery damage to creatures and objects outlined by it. Damage is 2d4 hp per round, though a successful saving throw vs. spell reduces the damage by one-half. (Note that this saving throw must be rolled each round, and a successful save reduces the damage for that round only.)

Faerie flames cannot be doused with water, smothering, or other methods normally used to extinguish flames, though magical means can be used, including a *wand of flame extinguishing* or a successful *dispel magic*.

The material components for this spell are a small piece of foxfire and an ounce of pure sulphur, both of which are consumed in the casting.

Note: *Faerie flames* is one of the spells required in the creation of wands of faerie spheres, as detailed in *DRAGON Magazine* #220.

Garments of Elvenkind (Enchantment/Charm)

Sphere: All

Level: 6

Range: Touch

Components: V,S,M

Duration: 1 turn/level

Casting Time: 3 rounds

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: None

Available to all of the elven priesthoods, this spell enables the caster temporarily to enchant a cloak, a pair of boots, and a pair of bracers so that they function as certain magical items. The cloak functions as a *cloak of elvenkind* for the duration of the spell. Similarly, the boots act as *boots of elvenkind* and the bracers operate as *bracers of archery* for the duration.

Once enchanted, these items may be used by anyone; however, all three must be used by the same creature. If the items are distributed among several individuals, the magic fails and is wasted. A successful *dispel magic* ends the spell.

The material components for this spell are the caster's holy symbol, three drops from a *potion of invisibility* (for the cloak), three small objects (e.g., stone, twig, coin, etc.) that once carried a *silence dweomer* (for the boots), and three arrows bearing any form of magical enchantment (including an enchantment as simple as a *faith arrow* (see above) or a *Nystul's magic aura*). With the exception of the holy symbol, these components are consumed.



Gnomish Priest Spells

Segojan's Armor

(Abjuration, Enchantment/Charm)

Sphere: Plant, Protection

Level: 1

Range: Touch

Components: V,S,M

Duration: 1 day

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: None

As its name implies, this spell is reserved for the priests of Segojan Earthcaller.

Prior to casting the spell, the priest gathers an armload of grass and roots, and places the material in a pile. Next, an ounce of powdered iron is sprinkled over the collected foliage, and the spell is cast. As the incantation is uttered, the roots and grass weave themselves into a suit of armor tailored specifically to the caster; other beings may not wear it.

Once donned, Segojan's armor provides protection equal to leather armor. Although it does not possess any magical "pluses," it does radiate magic. Because of its composition, it is nearly weightless, with an encumbrance value equal to normal clothing. However, Segojan's armor is regarded as actual armor, so magical items like bracers of defense and spells like armor cannot be used with it.

When the spell expires, the armor immediately unravels into its compo-

nent parts. A successful *dispel magic* or similar effect ends the spell prematurely.

In addition to the material components noted above, the caster's holy symbol is required during the casting. Only the iron powder is consumed.

Burrow

(Alteration)

Sphere: Elemental (earth)

Level: 2

Range: 0

Components: V,S,M

Duration: 1 turn +1 round/level

Casting Time: 2

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: None

This spell is usually associated with the priests of Segojan Earthcaller, but it is not surprising to find that Urdlen's priests have access to it as well.

When the spell is cast, the priest's fingernails lengthen and become as hard as stone. For the duration of the spell, the caster may use these claws to burrow through earth, sand, clay, gravel (but not solid rock), and so forth, excavating such material with enough speed to provide a movement rate of 3, much like a badger or other burrowing mammal.

In addition, the caster may use these claws as weapons if the situation demands. The priest may attack with both hands if using the claws, with each successful strike inflicting 2-5 hp damage, plus Strength bonuses if applicable.

This spell ends early if subjected to a successful *dispel magic*, if the caster dies, or by the caster's silent act of will.

The material components for this spell include the caster's holy symbol, a tuft of fur from a burrowing mammal, and a tiny replica of a shovel. The fur and shovel are consumed.

Analyze Contraption

(Divination)

Sphere: Divination

Level: 3

Range: Touch

Components: V,S,M

Duration: Instantaneous

Casting Time: 3

Area of Effect: One contraption

Saving Throw: None

This spell is available only to the priests of Nebelun, "the Meddler."

This spell enables the caster to determine the intended purpose of unfamiliar mechanical devices. The priest touches the object in question and receives a mental picture depicting what the object is supposed to do. (Note that what a contraption is supposed to do is not necessarily the same as what the contraption will do; gnomish contraptions are notorious for reacting in unexpected ways. Note also that, while this spell tells the caster how a device works, it does not tell the caster how to operate the device.)

In addition to the complex machines typically associated with gnomes, this spell can also be used to analyze contraptions like mechanical traps and locks, clockwork monsters and devices, even unique artifacts like the Apparatus of Kwalish, the Machine of Lum the Mad, or the Mighty Servant of Leuk-O.

The material component for this spell is the caster's holy symbol, which is not consumed.

Shades of Rhondang

(Evocation)

Sphere: Elemental (fire)

Level: 4

Range: Touch

Components: V,M

Duration: 1 round/level

Casting Time: 4

Area of Effect: One hammer

Saving Throw: None

This spell is available only to the priesthood of Flandal Steelskin. It gains its name by allowing the caster temporarily to duplicate certain powers of Flandal's magical hammer, *Rhondang*.

When the spell is cast, the caster's hammer bursts into flames, taking on

the characteristics of a flame tongue sword. Thus, while the spell lasts, the hammer is regarded as a +1 weapon, +2 vs. regenerating creatures, +3 vs. cold-using, flammable, and avian creatures, and +4 vs. undead. Likewise, it produces light equal to a torch and can ignite flammable objects with a simple touch.

Shades of Rhondang functions only if used on a nonmagical hammer. If cast on a magical hammer or any other type of weapon, the spell automatically fails. Furthermore, the hammer to be affected must be the caster's own, and cannot be passed to another creature; the caster must use the hammer himself. Attempting to cast the spell on someone else's hammer, or seeking to pass the hammer to another creature, immediately negates the spell.

Shades of Rhondang is negated if subjected to a successful *dispel magic* or similar effect, if the caster is slain, rendered unconscious, or releases his grip on the handle. Since the caster must retain a hold on the hammer to prevent the spell from ending early, he may not cast spells that require somatic components, nor perform any actions that require the use of both hands.

The material components for this spell are the caster's holy symbol and the hammer to be affected, neither of which are consumed by the spell.

Mantle of Baravar

(Abjuration)

Sphere: Protection

Level: 5

Range: 0

Components: V,S,M

Duration: 1 turn +1 round/level

Casting Time: 5

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: None

Available only to the priests of Baravar Cloakshadow, this spell provides the caster (only) with extra protection against illusion/phantasm magic by conveying upon him a specialized form of magic resistance. This magic resistance functions the same as standard magic resistance, but is effective only against illusion/phantasm spells. The caster receives 2% magic resistance per point of Intelligence he possesses. The protection conveyed by this spell is in addition to any saving throws normally granted by an illusion/phantasm spell used against the caster.

The caster can end this spell at any time by act of will alone, but a success-

ful *dispel magic* or more potent effect can end it prematurely.

The material component for this spell is the caster's holy symbol.

Halfling Priest Spells

Reed Staff

(Alteration)

Sphere: Plant

Level: 1

Range: Touch

Components: V,M

Duration: 1 round/level

Casting Time: 1

Area of Effect: One blade of grass

Saving Throw: None

This spell is used primarily by the priesthood of Sheela Peryroyl, though, from time to time, Yondalla's priests are known to use it as well.

When this spell is cast, the priest is able to transform a normal blade of field grass into a quarterstaff, which can then be used as a weapon. Although the quarterstaff possesses no bonuses to attack or damage rolls, it is considered a magical weapon for purposes of determining what creatures it can successfully strike.

Only the caster may use the *reed staff*; if another creature attempts to use it, the spell is negated. The caster need not remain in contact with the *reed staff*, however. The priest is free to set down the weapon in order to perform other actions, including fighting with another weapon, casting a spell, and so forth.

The spell can be ended prematurely if exposed to a successful *dispel magic* or brought into contact with an anti-magic shell, dead magic area, are similar effect.

The material components for this spell are the caster's holy symbol, a splinter of wood, and the blade of grass to be affected. The splinter is consumed upon casting, while the blade of grass is consumed upon the spell's expiration.

Weapon Shift

(Alteration)

Sphere: Combat

Level: 2

Range: Touch

Components: V,S,M

Duration: 1 round/level

Casting Time: 2

Area of Effect: One weapon

Saving Throw: None

Available only to the priests of Arvoreen, this spell enables the caster to transform a particular weapon into an entirely different weapon. However, the spell has several important limitations, as follows:



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First, the final product must be a weapon that the caster can use without penalty, with regards to both class restrictions and proficiency status.

Second, the weapon to be changed must be of similar size, and composed of the same material, as the weapon it will become. For example, a wooden club cannot be turned into a steel short sword, though a steel short sword could be transformed into a steel club. Likewise, a quarterstaff could be turned into a short bow, as they are of a similar size, but the quarterstaff could not be changed into a long bow, which is far larger.

Third, weapons that carry a magical dweomer, even if it is only a temporary enchantment (e.g., *Nystul's magic aura*, light, etc.), cannot be influenced by this spell. Casting it on a magical weapon simply wastes the spell.

Fourth, the transformed weapon receives no bonuses to attack or damage rolls, nor is it able to strike creatures that can be hit only by magical weapons. The altered weapon will radiate magic if detected, however.

Finally, the caster must keep the weapon in hand for the duration of the spell, else it immediately reverts to its true form. Thus, the caster cannot pass the weapon to another being, nor cast spells that require somatic components or perform actions that require two hands.

Weapon shift can be negated if subjected to a successful *dispel magic* or more powerful effect.

The material components for this spell is the priest's holy symbol and the weapon to be transformed. Neither item is consumed in the spell's casting.

Stealth of Brandobaris

(Alteration)

Sphere: Guardian

Level: 3

Range: 0

Components: S,M

Duration: 1 turn +1 round/level

Casting Time: 1

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: None

As the name suggests, the use of this spell is the province of the priesthood of Brandobaris.

When this spell is cast, the priest temporarily gains the ability to Move Silently and Hide in Shadows as a thief of equal level. Dexterity and racial adjustments apply, as does armor restrictions. If the caster is a multiclassed thief/priest (as noted in *Monster Mythology*, page 39), his chance of success when using either skill is increased by 20%.

Stealth of Brandobaris is cancelled if exposed to a successful *dispel magic* or similar power. It cannot be cast on another creature; only the caster can benefit from the spell.

It should be noted that, due to the nature of the magic, no verbal component is required to cast the spell. Instead, the priest uses his holy symbol and a silent gesture, coupled with a mental

prayer to Brandobaris, to invoke the spell.

Call Hounds

(Conjuration/Summoning)

Sphere: Animal, Summoning

Level: 4

Range: 10' radius

Components: V,S,M

Duration: 1 turn/level

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: None

This spell is granted only to members of Urogalan's clergy.

When cast, a pair of jet-black hounds appear anywhere within the spell's range, as desired by the caster. The hounds are completely loyal to the caster, and will attempt to carry out the caster's every command, so long as such actions do not contradict the tenets of Urogalan's faith (if ordered to undertake such a task, the hounds simply vanish, ending the spell). The caster's control over the hounds is nearly absolute; only a full *wish* or divine intervention is sufficient to subvert the hounds' loyalty to the caster.

The hounds are regarded as war dogs (*MONSTROUS MANUAL™* tome, page 57) with maximum hit points (18 hp) and lawful neutral alignment. They are more intelligent than normal war dogs (INT low), however, and are capable of understanding complex instructions.

Call hounds ends if the hounds are slain or subject to a banishment spell, if the caster is slain or rendered unconscious, or if the caster wills the spell to cease; *dispel magic* has no effect on the hounds. *Protection from good* and similar powers can keep the hounds at bay, however.

The material components for this spell are the caster's holy symbol and a silver dog whistle (worth at least 50 gp), which the caster sounds during casting. The whistle is consumed upon the spell's expiration.



Robert guesses that nearly every gaming group has its resident demihuman enthusiasts. His is no different. In his game group are Jason G., Dale S., Chuck M., and Brian H. for dwarves; Phil D. and Bryan S. for dwarves and gnomes; Glen H., Eric P., and Chuck M. (again) for elves and half-elves; and last but not least, his brother Greg for half-pint, "must you steal everything?" halflings. This article is for him.

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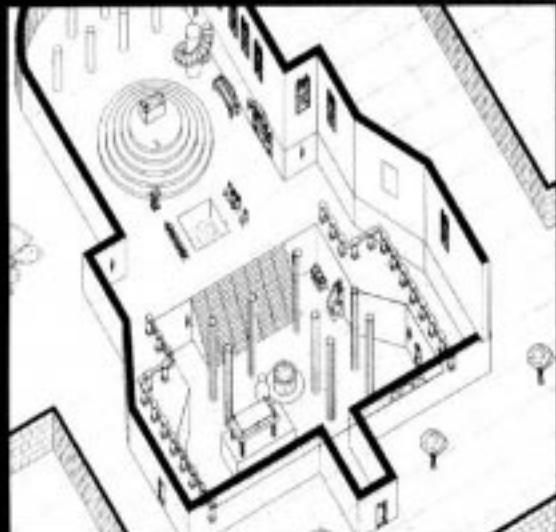
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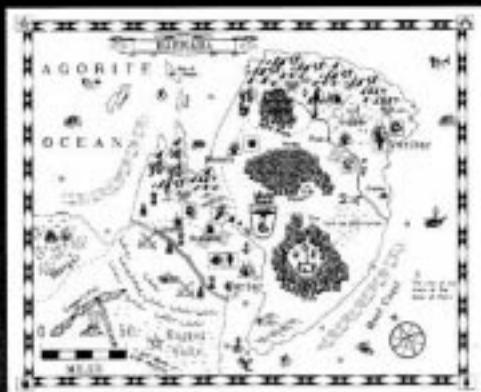
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TRACKING THE FAITH

How pious is your PC?

by Lachlan MacQuarrie

illustrated by Lorelle Ahlstrom

Here is a system to quantify a character's piety, or the amount of divine favor that PC or NPC enjoys as a result of his behavior. Through obeying the teachings of the faith, upholding its beliefs, and working to increase its power, PCs of any class can gain the support and approval of their gods. DMs will have a new tool to encourage role-playing, and players will have a clear set of guidelines and goals.

Throughout this article, a character's "faith" is the religion he belongs to, the god he worships, the philosophy he espouses, or the natural forces he represents (i.e., the force of Good or Chaos). A "servant" is a cleric, paladin, priest, monk, lay brother, or other character who is part of the clergy or one of the immediate servants of the faith. A "follower" is any other class (or zero-level) who is a member of the faith. Despite their ability to cast priest spells, rangers are followers, not servants.

Effects of piety

A character's piety is measured by piety points, which are gained through pious acts and lost through impiety. The PC's current number of piety points determine his piety level. As with experience levels, increased piety brings more benefits that "kick in" at discrete intervals. Unlike experience, however, it is easy to lose piety and drop a level.

The listed piety points (PP) are the minimum necessary to enter the corresponding category. All followers of a faith begin play with 1 point of piety in their given faith. All servants (priests and paladins) begin with 1d4 PP.

At higher levels of piety, all followers and servants gain with special powers or advantages as a sign of divine favor and as further weapons in the fight against the enemies of the faith. All benefits of piety are cumulative.

The character's effective power level with any granted ability is the same as

that of a paladin of the same experience level.

Example: A pious follower of Oghma (a 12th-level bard) has been given the major ability to turn undead. When he does, he has the same chance as a paladin of the same level, who can turn as a 10th-level cleric.

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Table 1: Piety point progression

level	Points	Description
VI	256	Ascended
V	128	Exalted
IV	64	Inspired
III	32	Blessed
II	16	Devoted
I	0	Average

Note: An "ascended" character is drawn up by his god into an outer plane, there to serve for all eternity as a favored companion. This may or may not be a pleasant way to spend eternity. The PC is out of the campaign. (He "wins.")

Table 2: Servants' benefits & penalties

	Granted favor
Exalted	90% magic resistance vs. one sphere of spells (DM's choice).
Inspired	Cast <i>holy/unholy word</i> 1/day.
Blessed	+1 bonus to all saves, attack and damage rolls.
Devoted	Raise effective spell level by 2.*
Average	Spellcasting hampered.**

*Treat the caster as two levels higher when determining the effect of a given spell (duration, area of effect, and so on).

**Clerics may only cast as many spells per day as they have piety points. Paladins may not cast spells unless their piety points are 10 or higher.

Table 3: Benefits for followers

Level	Granted favor
Exalted	Granted major ability (see Table 5).
Inspired	Granted minor ability (see Table 4).
Blessed	+2 bonus to all saving throws.
Devoted	+4 Reaction bonus vs. NPC clergy.*
Average	No special effects.

*of same or allied faith

Table 4: Minor abilities

(roll 1d6 or DM choose one)
1 Cast a 1st-level clerical spell 1/week.*
2 Permanent protection from evil/good.
3 Cast <i>remove/bestow curse</i> 1/week.
4 Cast <i>divination</i> 1/week.
5 +4 saving throw bonus vs. illusion.
6 Immune to all diseases.

*The spell is selected by the DM at the time this benefit is first rolled, and may never be changed.

Table 5: Major abilities

(roll 1d6 or DM choose one)
1 Pray for and cast spells as paladin.*
2 Radiate both protection from evil/good and a bravery/fear spell, both 10' radius.
3 Turn/control undead.
4 Raise dead/slay living 1/week.
5 Heal/harm by laying on hands as paladin.
6 90% magic resistance vs. one sphere of spells (DM's choice, affects spells level 1-3 only).

*Followers of neutral faiths may pray for either version of reversible spells, but may not access the sphere of Combat. Followers of evil faiths may access all four paladin spheres (Combat, Divination, Healing and Protection), but may only cast the reversed form of any reversible spell.

Table 6: Divine Curses *

(roll 1d6 or DM choose one)
1 Reduce one ability score by 3.
2 Clumsy. -4 penalty to all attack and saving throws.
3 Legs shrivel. Movement reduced by 25%.
4 Lose one sense (sight, hearing or smell).
5 Lose one experience level, cannot be restored until the curse itself is lifted.
6 Lose a class ability (i.e., thieves cannot pick pockets).

* It is possible to receive the same curse more than once. The effects of all curses are cumulative.

Piety level in the campaign

A character's piety represents the protective "aura" placed around him by his faith. This aura is usually invisible, but it may be detected by the appropriate spells. All extraplanar servants of the character's faith automatically know his current piety level, and all extraplanar servants of other faiths can detect his piety level by making a successful Wisdom check.

Extremely pious characters (piety IV or higher) may, at the DM's option, become noticeable to the casual observer. The nature of their aura will generally reflect the character's faith. For example, a follower of a good-aligned faith may radiate a feeling of peace and goodwill, while a servant of evil may radiate a sense of chilling unease.

Gaining and Losing Piety

Characters receive piety-point gains or losses at the same time they receive experience points, when the events of the adventure are still fresh in the DM's mind. Since different faiths have different demands, the DM will use a specific set of guidelines for each faith (see Designing the Faith, below).

To calculate piety awards, simply add all applicable awards and penalties to determine one number, to a maximum of +1 to +4 points per game session (although any number of points can be lost during an adventure, there should be a strict limit on how many can be gained). Note that one act could have many consequences. For example, robbing a poor box is both "theft from a church," and "harming the weak").

Canny players will plan their actions so as to minimize piety losses and maximize gains (killing only in a good cause, doing a few extra good deeds to make up for a lapse, etc.).

Add all awards to the player's current total, and apply all results immediately. Transition from one level to another is a major event in a character's life, of course, and DM's may wish to throw in some sort of sign or omen (a pleasant or disturbing dream, an unusual bit of weather, etc.).

If the total piety points are reduced below 0, the character's piety remains at 0, and a divine curse is placed on the character as a warning (see Table 6). A character at 0 piety who commits a further offense earns a further curse for every three such offenses (rounded down).

Duration of curses: If this is the first time for the character, a good or tolerant faith may let him off with a warning, and the curse will only last one day. Otherwise, all curses are permanent until the character has atoned for his deeds. Although a character may earn enough piety to go above 0, all curses remain until the offense that triggered each one is atoned for separately.

Designing the faith

Although all faiths have much the same categories of awards and penalties, each faith will have specific behaviors that earn each one. For example, although all faiths require some sort of regular ceremonial observance, the exact nature of the observance can vary widely, from some private meditation to wild festivals. Although the DM can determine the specific actions that will earn each award or penalty for all the common religions in his campaign world, it will certainly lessen his workload (and heighten player interest), if the PC collaborates in the design of his faith. Of course, the DM has the final say in all such decisions.

Awards and Penalties

For each award, the corresponding penalty for doing the opposite is given.

All followers and servants

1. Following minimal standard of behavior. A minimum standard of behavior (attending occasional services, giving spare change to the church, not spitting on the shrine, etc.) is neither very interesting to roleplay nor the sort of heroic sacrifice that really inspires the deities who watch over the campaign world. PCs do not have to roleplay any of these minimums, but don't get anything for them, either: No change to piety.

Failure to uphold minimum standards, mocking faith, or seizing chance to break a minor observance (e.g., drinking on a day of abstinence): -1 piety.

2. Attending major religious event: +1 piety. Major events, such as festivals, mysteries, or observances, occur about 3-6 times a year. Each one should occupy most or all of a day, and involve some sort of expense (either a sacrifice, a gift, or "I simply must buy a new robe for Year Day!"), from 1-100 gp.

Neglecting to attend a major event for any reason: -1 piety.

3. Tithes a percentage of all income: +1 piety (10% tithe), +2 piety (50%), +3

piety 90%). This is the same as the paladin requirement (paladins get no extra piety for a 10% tithe). A "tithe" is a percentage of income donated to NPC clergy; it may not otherwise benefit any PC in any way. The percentage of income that a given faith requires is entirely up to the DM (tithe 10%, +1 piety; 50%, +2 piety; 90%, +3 piety).

Fails to make required tithe: -1 piety

4. Constructs a small shrine: +1 piety.

Specific requirements must be determined by the DM, but may include building the structure alone and by hand, spending 100 gp or more, consecration of the site by a servant of the faith, or placing the shrine in a specific location (such as beside a bridge, or in a forest). Players may not gain piety for constructing more than one small shrine per game month.

Harms small shrine of own faith: -2 piety.

5. Constructs a temple: +4 piety. This may be a church, a monastery, a school run by monks, or even a hospital (like those run by the Knights Hospitaller during the Crusades). Temples must be well-constructed (of average or better quality), and have a central meeting area, one or more altars, and smaller rooms sufficient for the temple's purposes. PCs are entirely responsible for either constructing or funding the temple (see *The Castle Guide* for costs, or roll randomly 10d10 x 1,000 gp), and finding a staff for it. Constructing a temple is a major campaign event, and the DM may wish to build one or more adventures around it. Note that strongholds that higher-level characters build in order to attract followers do not count.

Harms temple of own faith: -10 piety

6. Martyrdom: +10 piety. This is dying a conspicuously heroic death at the hands of an enemy of the faith while fighting for one's own faith. At the DM's option, players who were well aware that a member of the party had *raise dead* memorized do not qualify for this award.

Betrayal of a holy cause to the enemy in order to save one's own life: -10 piety.

7. Aiding servant of own faith: +1 piety. Assists an NPC servant in their duties or quests, without thought of reward.

Harms servant of own faith (double penalty of servant who is killed; halve current piety if servant has zero piety): -2 piety per Hit Die of servant.

8. Harming or impeding a member of enemy faith: +1 piety. An "enemy faith" isn't just a faith that isn't an ally . . . it's a faith that is actively opposed to yours, and whose servants work to harm yours. Highly intolerant faiths regard all other faiths as "enemy."

Aids member of enemy faith (halve if member of enemy faith has zero piety): -2 piety.

Priests & Paladins

1. Carry out any of the above duties. All servants are expected to perform all eight duties above and receive the same amount of piety as a follower would.

Committing any of the above offenses: double the piety loss.

2. Carrying out additional basic duties of servants: +0. This includes performing ceremonies, giving advice and spiritual guidance, casting spells to aid followers, obeying all class restrictions, and so on. Again, it is assumed that PCs are doing this unless they say otherwise, and each duty does not have to be "gamed out" in detail.

Neglecting basic duty (each day or fraction of a day): -2 piety

All followers and servants of specific faiths

In addition to common behaviors listed above, each faith has unique awards and penalties.

For each faith, find the portfolio or portfolios below describing that faith, and add the listed awards and penalties to the character's requirements. (More complete descriptions of these portfolios can be found in *The Complete Priest's Handbook*.) For example, Selune (of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting) is the deity of both the Moon and of a specific craft (navigation). DMs should use these listings as guidelines, adding new entries or modifying the existing ones to reflect the portfolios of the deities in their campaigns.

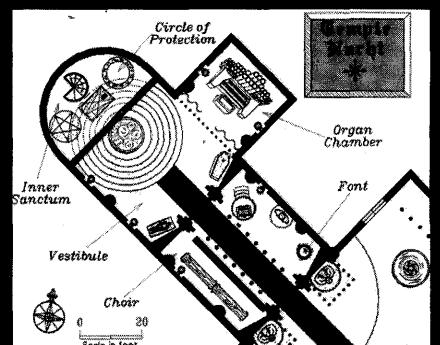
Many deities and some forces also have an alignment. Any such faiths also demand either good, neutral, or evil behavior from their followers and servants. For such faiths, add the appropriate alignment behaviors from the list below. For example, besides being concerned with the stars and navigation, Selune is also chaotic good. All followers and servants of Selune can also gain piety by good acts (or lose it by non-good acts) but these awards and penal-

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ties are given out only 50% of the time (see "Chaos," below).

The following entries contain a mixture of specific awards and rules notes.

Agriculture

Wilfully harming crops or pasture-land: -1 piety.

Ancestors

A "shrine" includes any permanent grave-marking or tombstone.

Animals, Nature.

Helping any animal or natural area without thought of reward: +1 piety.

Harming animals or plants unnecessarily: -1 piety.

Arts

(Includes writing, painting, calligraphy, or even music and singing.)

Spending more than one NWP in a particular art: +1 piety.

Donating large amounts of money to fund the art: +1 piety.

Harming an unflawed work of the specific art: -1 piety.

Balance, Neutrality

Faiths of True Neutrality regard both paladins and assassins as "enemies of the faith" 50% of the time.

Opposing imbalance of relevant dimension (either law- chaos, or good-evil): +0 piety.

Aggravates existing imbalance: -1 piety.

Birth, Children

Giving birth to or caring for child: +1 piety/year.

Harm a mother or child: -5 piety.

Chaos

Faiths that are strongly chaotic will notice and reward (or punish) any particular behavior only 50% of the time.

Community

The deity of a particular community or city will regard all citizens of that community as "followers of an allied faith" and any traitors as "enemies of the faith."

Suffer serious wound or die in defense of the city: +5 piety.

Crafts

(Includes any secondary skill or non-weapon proficiency that isn't an artistic one.) A large guild-hall devoted to the teaching of the craft counts as a "temple."

Spend an extra NWP in the specific craft: +1 piety.

Cause a technique to be lost or forgotten (for example, by killing the only master craftsman who knows it): -4 piety.

Dawn, Beginnings

Begin a major enterprise (any task whose outcome is uncertain and which would take one or more adventures to complete): +2 piety.

Darkness, Night, Endings

Complete a major enterprise: +1 piety.

Live in darkness or low light around the clock: +1 piety/month.

Death

Assist in the death of another: +1 piety.

Save the life of a dying person (through the use of spells, healing or binding wounds): -3 piety.

Proficiency notes

Religion: In addition to its other uses, the Religion NWP automatically gives knowledge of commandments and prohibitions and associated piety gains and losses) for the owner's faith. A successful NWP check gives the same information for other common faiths in the area.

NPC clergy spend a lot of their time using this NWP to give guidance to their flock. However, such guidance is only the owner's "best guess", and may or may not be the actual intent of the deity.

Spell notes

In general, any spell that specifically affects "evil" creatures (such as *protection from evil*, *detect evil or holy word*) will function on characters of an evil faith only if their Piety Level is II ("devoted") or higher — in other words, if they are strongly evil.

The reverse is also true. Reversed spells of this nature affect good characters only if they are strongly good (good-aligned followers or servants with a piety of Level II or higher).

For the purposes of the following, any offense that causes a loss of 4 or more piety points is a "major offense," while any offense that causes losses of from one to three points are "minor" offenses.

Animate Dead: Any good magic-user who employs this spell loses 1d10 piety points immediately. Any good cleric or paladin loses 2d10 points. Neutral magic-users lose 1d6 points, and neutral clerics or paladins lose 1d10.

Atonement: If the character is truly repentant (DM's discretion), this spell will replace the piety points lost as the result of one minor offense. If the loss had triggered a divine curse, the curse may now be removed by a cleric (but not a magic-user). Major offenses cannot be redeemed by this spell (see Quest).

Augury: Instead of warning of physical danger, an augury may be cast to warn of "spiritual" danger—in other words, whether the character's piety will be raised or lowered if the proposed action is carried out.

Commune: Can also be used to determine possible gains or losses in piety from contemplated actions. As in the *Player's Handbook* spell description, commune can be used to discover a way to achieve a goal while minimizing danger—in this case, danger to one's piety (e.g., "Don't kill the guard. Offer him a job!"

Dispel Magic: The magical effects of a divine curse or granted ability on their recipient may not be dispelled.

Divination: In addition to its other effects, a divination may be used for spiritual advice. This advice will contain clues as to the best way to avoid losses of piety points as a result of the cleric's intended actions. Note that "Stay home!" is often a good piece of advice.

Limited wish: Can be used to restore the piety lost by one minor offense, or to counteract the effects of a divine curse for 1d6 turns.

Quest: If the target accepts and carries out the quest, a major past offense against the granting faith will be forgiven, and the resulting piety loss restored. If this loss had triggered a divine curse that curse may now be removed.

Raise dead: If the target died with at least one divine curse, his resurrection chance is rolled with a 10% penalty. A strongly pious character (II or higher), on the other hand, gains a 10% bonus to his resurrection check.

Reincarnation: If the target died with at least one divine curse, the new incarnation will be the least desirable one (e.g., a kobold, if the target used to be an elf, or a stag, if the target was a hunter), and may, at the DM's option, also suffer an additional curse from table 6.

A strongly pious target (piety level II or higher) may roll twice on the reincarnation table, and take the best result.

Remove curse: A divine curse (see Table 3) may not be removed by a wizard. A cleric of 16th level or higher will be able to remove the curse, as part of the character's conversion (see above) to that cleric's faith, or if the character had previously atoned (see atonement or quest, above) for the

crime that triggered the curse. Any other attempt to remove the curse by magical means will fail.

Resurrection: If the target died with at least one divine curse, his resurrection chance is rolled with a 20% penalty. A strongly pious character (II or higher), on the other hand, gains a 20% bonus to his resurrection check.

True seeing: The clerical version of this spell will reveal the approximate level of the target's piety (within one level), and the alignment of the target's faith. This replaces the "detect alignment" portion of the *Player's Handbook* spell description.

The wizard version of the spell does not reveal any piety information.

Wish: Can be used to restore the piety lost by one major offense, to raise the piety of the character by one point, or to counteract the effects of a divine curse for 1d6 hours.

Skills & Powers conversions

The *PLAYER'S OPTION™: Skills & Powers* rulebook offers another system for tracking the effects of a servant's faith — conditional priests, whose spell-casting depends on how well their actions are currently serving their religion. While "piety" changes slowly over the course of a campaign, "conditionals" can fluctuate rapidly, shifting many times in the course of a single adventure or even a single encounter.

DMs can use the listed piety awards to help create conditionals or allow servants (only) to use bath concepts, tracking a servant's long-term behavior as well as his immediate actions. If so, each level of piety above I (average) counts as a +1 conditional modifier and each divine curse counts as a -1 penalty. The effects of piety and of conditionals are cumulative, except that no servant ever receives the +2 level bonus for being "devoted."

Note that the same action can lead to immediate conditional modifiers as well as long-term piety changes.



Specific race (i.e., elves, dwarves, humans, orcs):

Racial enemies are counted as "enemies of the faith."

Specific season (i.e., winter, spring, summer, fall)

"Major religious events" will take place during the relevant season.

Time

Conceal the passage of time (for example, wearing cosmetics to conceal wrinkles): -1 piety.

Artificially accelerate or retard time (through such spells as *withdraw*, or such items as potions of longevity): -2 piety.

Trade, Money

Create new source of wealth (open a new trade route, develop a new industry, sign a new trade agreement): +4 piety.

Accumulate personal fortune: + 1 piety/50,000 gp.

Break a contract (unless deity is chaotic): -2 piety.

War

Commencing a battle (to the person who started the fight, only) +1 piety.

Leaving a fight for any reason: -1 piety.

Cowardice: -2 piety.

Weather, a Specific Weather (i.e., lightning)

Avoiding the effects of the relevant weather (for example, followers of a rain-god who stay inside until the rain stops): -1 piety.

Optional systems

The conversion

Either through misfortune or misplay, the character has found himself with no piety and one or more divine curses. Clearly, the player chose the wrong starting faith, and would be happier with a faith closer to his own playing style.

In such circumstances, many characters (and some PCs) may opt to convert to a new faith which is more in line with his own beliefs and actions.

Procedure: The character must seek out a clergy (or, at the DM's option, a holy place) of the desired faith, and humbly petition the deity or force, through prayer, fasting, and ceremony, for protection and guidance. This petition is usually granted, as most powers

are always on the lookout for new recruits. The character will have all previous piety points, effects and curses (and granted abilities) erased, and receives a new piety of 1 point, in the new faith.

If the new faith allows the previous character class, the character may continue in his current class, but with a 50% penalty to all earned XP until he has risen one experience level (this duplicates the effect of changing alignments). If the new faith does not permit the previous class (for example, a paladin converting to an evil faith), then the character becomes the "base" character class (a paladin becomes a fighter, an assassin becomes a thief, etc.), minus one level of experience, and suffers the 50% penalty to earned experience points until he has risen two experience levels.

Player characters may never convert more than once in their lives.

Nonplayer characters convert only at the DM's option, as the result of massive effort on the PC's part, involving several weeks of debate, conversation, demonstrations of the faith's power, persuading the NPC of the rightness of the associated behaviors, and so on. At the end of that time, the DM may secretly allow the NPC a save vs. spells. If this is failed, the NPC has converted and the relevant PCs receive +1 piety points apiece, minus whatever they lost by coercing the NPC, etc. Of course, a clever NPC may pretend to be converted . . .

Divine intervention

At the DM's option, characters may attempt to gain divine intervention by appealing directly to their faith.

Procedure: the PC (or NPC) spends one action to make the appeal, and rolls a d20. If the roll is less than the character's current piety point total, the appeal is successful, and the character receives divine aid. The aid will be useful, but never more than the minimum necessary to solve an immediate problem. Attackers may be distracted long enough for the character to win an initiative die roll, a poison dart will be coated with a weaker poison than usual, the character will notice a secret door he missed before, and so on.

Deities dislike being called on at random intervals, so all such appeals (successful or not) will cost the player 1d10 piety points. Note that enemy NPCs can roll for divine intervention, too.

The pantheon

One type of faith is the pantheon — a faith built around a group of gods. Followers and servants of this faith must obey and follow the dictates of all of the members of the pantheon, but tend to focus on one particular part. At the DM's option, characters may select a group of allied or related gods to form the core of their faith, and one member of that group to be their "primary" deity. The grouping may or may not have any formal relationship, or might just happen to be the four or five deities that the character likes the most.

Throughout the campaign, the character receives full piety awards and penalties from his primary deity, but only 50% (rounded down) of applicable rewards and penalties from the other deities of his pantheon (thus, he will have to earn at least two piety points from a secondary deity to get any piety).

In addition, all spells and other granted powers are assumed to come from the primary deity (for the purposes of allowed access to spheres and so on).

The skeptic

At the DM's option, players who do not wish to participate in the piety system are skeptics — characters who have the requisite strength of will (or sheer rebelliousness) to deny the power of a local deity, force, or philosophy. Skeptics never gain or lose piety. However, the force of a skeptic's disbelief is such that any beneficial clerical magic directed at him has a 20% chance of failing. The deity does not wish to aid such a skeptic, and any further attempts to cast beneficial clerical magic will automatically fail for the remainder of the day.

For obvious reasons, a skeptic can never be a cleric or paladin.



Lachlan MacQuarrie is a freelance writer living in New Brunswick, Canada. This is his second DRAGON® Magazine article, just in time to pay for a really nice birthday present for his wife.

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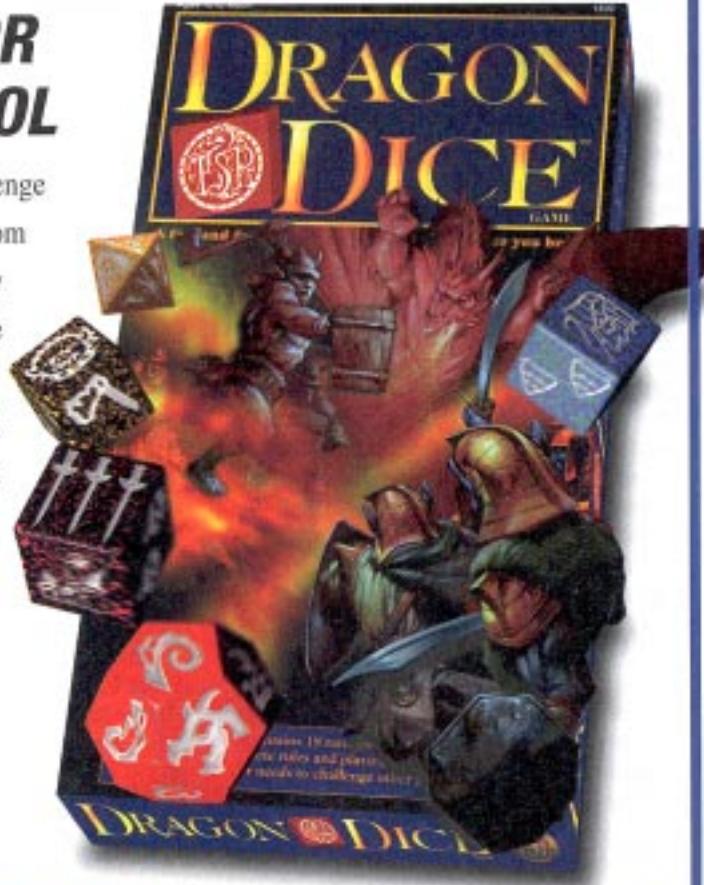
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Network News

by Jeff Quick

Gamers are great at hiding. In the U.S., role-playing is looked upon as something eccentric at best. So, through rigorous social Darwinism, all we gamers avoid ridicule by developing chameleon-like abilities of feigning interest in "normal" activities while blurring the telltale outlines of our gaming selves. Keep your collection of fantasy literature in the closet; don't quote Monty Python in front of the mundanes; and for heaven's sake don't leave those dice out where anyone could ask questions! This sort of rampant secrecy would almost seem sinister if it were something besides a defense mechanism.

If you've ever moved, gone to college, been stranded on a desert island, or otherwise separated from a regular gaming community, you know what I'm talking about. Suddenly, the same hiding tactics which used to protect you, keep you out. The guy at the desk next to you could own a complete, pristine set of GAMMA WORLD® games and modules, first through fourth edition, and you'd never know. What's a gamer to do?

This is not my soapbox to comment on whether this behavior is "good" or "bad" for us as a hobby or sub-culture. (though I may write that one someday). Instead, I want to talk about how this relates to the RPGA® Network, and what we can do for someone trapped outside a gaming group.

Our very name implies communication. We're the Role Playing Game Network. We're not an "Organization" or an "Agency" or "Foundation." As a network, we talk and we stay in touch. Part of our nature lifts the veil of gaming secrecy and eliteness, allowing communication and free exchange of ideas between members.

Composed of nearly 10,000 members worldwide, the Network is the largest collection of role-playing gamers in the world. Chances are good that, if you don't know any gamers nearby, we do. We even have a member search program. For a nominal fee, members can request a "ZIP code search." Here's how it works: you send in a list of five ZIP codes near you, and we send you back a list of members (or even clubs!) and contact information for your area. We can't promise explosive results, but we can promise to comb our extensive database to help you out.

In addition, we offer a Classified ads page in every issue of our POLYHEDRON® Newszine. It's a free service, and you can reach every member in the Network through it. for instance, here's a classified we ran a few month months ago:

MASSACHUSETTS: I'm 18 years old, been playing AD&D® for 5 years, and enjoy *M:tG**. I'm looking for folks to help me form a gaming club. If you live nearby and are interested, call or write. Ben(zo) Stanbury, 6 Middlesex St., Wellesley, MA 02181

That's all there is to it. While Ben never told us if he was successful or not, I have to believe he got some response, if for no other reason than we have a pretty heavy concentration of membership in the New England area. Through classifieds you can seek a club, or people interested in a game you already have running. Is your three-year DARK SUN® campaign dying due to player attrition? Classifieds can solve that problem.

Our third method of gamer location is, I think, the best. You take a game out and go make your own members. The

Network encourages and sponsors member efforts to demonstrate role-playing games in stores, libraries, schools, civic centers, or any place with a table and six or seven chairs.

Is there a TSR game system you enjoy and would like to spread? Take it to the streets, and we'll back you up. Demo a TSR game world in a game retailer's store, and you keep the demo materials we send you. Want to demonstrate the AD&D® game to new players? We'll send you all the stuff you need to get started, and when you're done, it's yours to keep. Think the BIRTHRIGHT® setting would draw some people into the gaming hobby? The Network will send qualifying members a boxed set to get them started. Once you've shown off the game to a few people, they may come back for more. After a while, you may find your struggle to find fellow gamers becomes a struggle to manage so many new recruits.

If you're a stranded gamer and not a member, now's a great time to join. Write to us at the address listed in the sidebar and we'll send you an envelope filled with all the stuff you need. A mere \$20 gets you into a world of gaming opportunities, not the least of which is the ability to focus on the blurred outlines of fellow gamers and pierce their hide-and-go-seek defenses.

They're out there, if you know how to look.



Born to a pack of wolves, Jeff Quick became separated from his litter at an early age. Eventually he was found by a family of humans and raised in the civilization as one of their own.

Want to join?

The RPGA® Network supports conventions all over the world with tournaments designed for many different game systems, but especially the AD&D game and all of TSR's campaign settings. The Network also publishes POLYHEDRON® Newszine, which members receive monthly.

For more information about the Networks programs, write to: RPGA Network, 201 Sheridan Springs Rd., Lake Geneva, WI 53147, or send e-mail to: rpgahq@aol.com.

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Deszeldaryndun Silverwing

by Ed Greenwood

illustrated by Storn Cook

The pryings of Volo (polished somewhat by Elminster, whose eyebrows rose on more than one occasion on his first reading of them) bring us this time to one of the good dragons of the North: Deszeldaryndun Silverwing, the Guardian Worm of Everlund, consort to the seldom-seen Valamaradace (the Dragon Queen of Silverymoon).

Silverwing is sometimes called "the Kindly Dragon" in the lore of the North, because he so often aids humans and demi-humans. Though he avoids human society and politics, Silverwing seems fascinated by individuals. Many are the lost, lonely or hurt folk he has healed and sheltered.

Deszeldaryndun has even been known to participate in the adventures of those he has befriended. He prefers to do such things entirely in disguise, so those he helps are unaware of his draconic nature. He does not hesitate, however, to reveal his true powers if such a tactic helps one of his chosen companions in need. He's also a shrewd judge of character and uses spells covertly to probe the alignment and true nature of any encountered being of whom he is unsure. (Silverwing is very rarely duped or taken unawares.)

Silverwing is a sleek, graceful silver wyrm who seems to enjoy a slow-paced, simple life in the wilds, spiced with frequent human contact that he initiates or for which he sets his own terms. (Those he wishes to avoid simply won't be able to find him if they come looking.) The Guardian Worm spends much of his time in human shape in the forests west of Everlund, posing as a woodcutter going by such names as Ergoth Falaer or Drouth Sammart. His spells, and the fungus caverns and stocked fishpools he has established provide him with ample food. When he takes wing to hunt, it is to deal with beasts he wants removed from his chosen domain, not to meet the demands of hunger.

Though only veteran rangers active in the area are likely to suspect that certain humans they meet with are in reality Deszeldaryndun, the Guardian Worm is famous in tavern-tales for the way in which he's tricked Zhentarim agents, members of the Arcane Brotherhood, Red Wizards, and other foes of law-abiding civilization in the North. He usually confounds such foes by assuming the shapes and mannerisms of powerful and influential persons (such as Khelben "Blackstaff" Arunsun and Elminster of Shadowdale) with uncanny precision.

Silverwing often impersonates Alustriel to allow her to slip away on covert (usually Harper or Chosen) business unnoticed, enhancing her reputation by allowing her to appear to be in two places at once or to respond to foes or crises with apparently blinding speed. On many occasions he has deliberately taken her place in dangerous situations (including several *antimagic shell-laden* ambushes intended to slay the High Lady of Silverymoon). Alustriel has kept such aid secret from all but her sons and certain fellow Chosen. Not even most senior Harpers know of it. The dragon renders such aid purely as a friend; although he approves of Alustriel's efforts to found a northern realm of relative safety and sophistication in the Moonlands of Luruar, Silverwing refuses to take any open part in the affairs of Alustriel's court, and he does not recognize that it has any authority over him (or his own Dragon Queen).

In return, Alustriel renders aid to both Silverwing and Valamaradace whenever they ask (they are several centuries past the time when they were too proud to request help from a human — albeit a special one, Chosen by a goddess). The Lady of Silverymoon has prevented several dragon battles by appearing, ready

to do battle, to surprise red dragons who've arrived to challenge Silverwing to combat — and on one occasion posed as Silverwing's human slave in a ruse that allowed him to fool a dragon foe.

The veteran Harper Orbrind Hauth-leather insists that the silent, cloaked swordsman who sometimes accompanies Alustriel in her palace and when she ventures outside the city is a shape assumed by some benevolent, powerful ally. Elminster confirms that the swordsman, who goes by the name of Talyn, is Silver-wing's favorite human shape when he's with Alustriel. (His consort Valamaradace is known to favor an agile, diminutive, elfin female human form and use the name of Targarda on her rare forays into civilized places.)

Although Deszeldaryndun is a silver dragon and Valamaradace is a gold, they're undeniably a couple, and all sources refer to Silver-wing as Valamaradace's "consort." The Dragon Queen is very rarely seen, but Deszeldaryndun often mingles with folk; he genuinely likes the company of intelligent, sensitive good-aligned humans. Silverwing is an adult worm of graceful build and an abundant sense of humor. He has a natural talent for mimicry, specializing in the voices, movements, and mannerisms of humans and half-elves of both sexes.

Kindness is the defining, governing element of Deszeldaryndun's character, but he also has an impish sense of humor. This often shows itself in his uttering both sides of apparent "whispered conversations" to trick eavesdroppers into wild goose chases, precipitous actions, and spreading false rumors.

Silverwing personally enjoys gossip, learning secrets, and being able to see the overall thrust and implications of all human activities in the Sword Coast North, but he enjoys a patience and self-control that no nosy human village busybody could hope to attain. Dragon Cultists and others who've tried to lure him into traps or revelations with the promise of rare or exclusive information have learned — sometimes to their cost — that Silver-wing's interests never override his prudence and wry, wary grasp of perils around him.

An accomplished singer with a prodigious memory for old lyrics and obscure harmonies, Deszeldaryndun eagerly follows the careers and performances of the bards and minstrels of Faerûn, both famous and obscure. He can often be found, in disguise, in fireside or tavern

audiences, drinking in every intonation and gesture (for his own mimicry, later). This habit has made him capable of perfectly aping the way certain musicians render songs — and, incidentally, passing some of the magical "song-lock" spells placed by certain Harpers.

Though he is a foe of pompous, humorless, or recklessly eager doers-of-good, Silverwing also likes and is entertained by the work of paladins, Harpers, and other positive agents in the Sword Coast North. He sometimes attaches himself to such individuals (and to less noble adventuring bands) as an uninvited, unannounced, and — as much as he can manage — unnoticed guardian and helper. Often when a warrior manages a "lucky escape," or a paladin prevails against impossible odds, the true cause is the watchful, unseen Guardian Worm of Everlund.

Deszeldaryndun's lair

Silverwing lairs with Valamaradace in the Floating Mountain, a gigantic, hollow oval rock whose uppermost surface rises into a ragged row of peaks or pinnacles. It is kept aloft by the spells of the Dragon Queen, which also enshroud it in mists and direct it wherever she desires. Usually it hovers low over the woods due west of Everlund, or south of there on the verges of the High Forest. Most folk who see it through its mists think that they're looking at one of the distant Starspires or "Sisters" (peaks that rise at the heart of the High Forest, far to the south). Occasional glimpses of its true nature have won the flying rock its nickname.

The dragon couple refer to their floating rock abode as Softwing, which often confuses others who overhear them talking into thinking they're speaking the name of another dragon. (Such handy misunderstandings are encouraged by the secretive couple.)

Softwing has one huge central cavern opening that a dragon of the largest size can glide into with wings fully spread, and many tiny, twisting passages that only humans or smaller creatures can traverse. These lead to two small exits from the lair, one on the underside of the rock and one on its upper surface, and to a treasure cavern underlying the main one. The small exits are known as "the open doors," and the underside pair provide the favorite manner of exit from Softwing for both its inhabitants; they dive from an exit in human form and take dragon shape while plunging earthward.

The cavern is guarded by a secret series of warding spells, but the magics veiling the open mouth of the main lair cavern include some known spells, woven by Deszeldaryndun: *gentle breath*, which slows falling or swiftly-flying creatures of even dragon size to a speedy and harmless stop; *guardian trumpet*, an alarm spell that announces, highlights, and traces intruders; and *icy claw*, a defensive spell that harms and paralyzes certain chosen types of creatures who fail to elude or withstand it.

Softwing has many secrets as yet unrevealed to those who've not fallen victim to its defenses. It is known, however, that a magic operating there allows both Deszeldaryndun and Valamaradace to generate multiple phantom images of themselves in either true draconic or assumed human-like form. These false images can act and speak independently, appear different from each other and from their creators, and even ape the words and motions of spellcasting — but the magic does not allow the images to carry any solid material, nor can it counterfeit any magical effect of a spell 'cast' by one of these illusions. Each dragon can maintain up to four images at once; no harm is suffered by their "destruction" (the images waver and vanish at the touch of any metal object or hostile spell), and their creators can alter or destroy them as often as desired, such changes being both swift and silent. They are used primarily to confuse intruders into attacking each other or wasting spells and missile weaponry on empty passages.

No friends or allies of the Dragon Queen and her consort are known to have been invited to Softwing except Alustriel of Silverymoon. Both Elminster and Khelben, however, have independently investigated the place in beast shapes, emerging (so far as they know) undetected. The Blackstaff told his lady Laeral of what he saw, and spoke of feeling a "waiting, watching presence" in Softwing, that maintains an alert and tireless vigil but conceals itself from both dragons. Knowing so little, he did not care to speculate on its nature and aims, but he found it "unsettling." Elminster detected no such lurking watcher.

Deszeldatyndun's domain

From his lair in the Floating Mountain, Silverwing roams a territory whose borders are set (and patrolled) by his consort; in recent years they are roughly the entire Moonwood to the north, southeast to Sundabar and back southwest

along the River Rauvin to Turlangtor (westernmost of the rocky heights that lie to the south of the river, and run east to Turnstone Pass). From there they plunge southwest into the Woods of Turlang to touch the Lost Peaks, and then run west along the Dessarin to a point south of Flint Rock, where they turn and run due north across the Evermoors to the River Surbrin, and thence along its banks back to the northern tip of the Moonwood again.

Although neither the Guardian Worm nor the Dragon Queen like to achieve prominence in the affairs of others in this area, it seems likely that their behind-the-scenes work and vigilant presence prevented the spread of the evil that was resident for so long in Hellgate Keep, aided the treants of Turlang in withstanding the depredations of other creatures, and kept the trolls from arising in numbers enough on the moors to sweep humans out of the inland North. The two dragons prefer to bring about the mysterious "vanishing" of key foes; they dislike the open hunting and spreading of fear practiced by so many other dragons.

The deeds of Deszeldaryndun

The favorite prey of Silverwing, on those rare occasions when he does hunt in earnest, is the hippogriff (he also likes horses and the deer of the High Forest). In human form, Deszeldaryndun loves roast almonds and cherry brandy. He likes to drink at several secluded pools in the Woods of Turlang, and once during a dry season he tore a huge chunk of ice from the edge of the Endless Ice Sea and carried it south to feed his drying pools and make the forest green again.

The Guardian Worm spends most of his days wandering the woods west of Everlund, observing their endless panorama of life as he contemplates, uses spells to scry afar, and plans what to do next. He is especially fond of finding rare, strange, and beautiful things — sights and deeds as well as flowers or other items — to share with his Dragon Queen, and carries a spell that records things he sees in his mind for vivid sharing with her, later. Thus, he can pass on to her the opening of a flower, the splendor of a sunset, or the touching valor of a deed performed by a human, sprite, or treant now dead.

How long Silverwing and his Queen have been together is not known by humans, though it is clearly more than a thousand years. Their love is deep and

unshakeable — both enjoy the freedom to pursue their own interests, friendships, and even love affairs among humans and demi-humans. They are capable of long-distance telepathy when necessary (probably through a magic forged by Valamaradace, but which either dragon can awaken) and admire each other even while they delightedly follow the doings of certain humans, just like the fans many Waterdhavian beauties attract.

Neither of the couple is interested in other dragons or even knows the names, breeds, and current deeds of neighboring worms. Neither has any known past or present alliances or matings with other dragons. They share similar attitudes toward other species (though Silverwing enjoys human contact far more than his Queen does) and nurture abiding hatreds only for the Cult of the Dragon and the dracoliches they've encountered.

Currently, Deszeldaryndun is working covertly to bring about a stable human realm in the North (that is, to aid Alustriel in establishing the land she dreams of, without being detected in his work) and to confound the agents of Thay, the Zhentarim, and the Dragon Cult who stray into the domain he shares with Valamaradace.

Deszeldaryndun's magic

Silverwing isn't known for spectacular spells, but he can employ mighty magics that his Dragon Queen devises and passes on to him, and so his potential spell arsenal should never be underestimated.

On at least one occasion, the Guardian Worm was reported to drop a "wild magic bomb" from aloft onto a party of magic-wielding foes: that is, a breakable container that unleashed temporary wild magic in a specific area upon breaking.

Gentle Breath

(Alteration)

Level: 2

Range: 0

Components: V

Duration: 2 rounds

Casting Time: 3

Area of Effect: See below

Saving Throw: None

This spell allows the dragon to breathe out a cloud of colorless, odorless vapors that rush out in a cone 6' across at its source and 30' across at its end, 60' distant. Any creatures that fall or fly into this area of effect (which dis-

sipates to powerlessness at spell expiration) are brought to a gentle but firm halt without harm.

The spell affects unwilling creatures, even if they are dragon-size or larger (ruining swoop and similar attacks). When the *gentle breath* expires, affected beings fall from where it brings them to a hover — but the caster of the *gentle breath* typically reaches up to take hold of them before that occurs.

The "hover" afforded by this magic is as stable as if affected creatures were standing on a floor (i.e., it can be walked on, to the limits of the cloud, where the "floor" abruptly ends, and used as a platform for spellcasting). Physical items from missile weapons to ropes can be passed, dropped, or hurled through the "floor," but affected creatures can pass through it only while in contact with another item, such as a reaching creature's limb, a tree branch, or a rope. A rope *trick* spell can penetrate the floor of a *gentle breath* without harming either magic.

If a creature casts *dispel magic* on a *gentle breath* cloud, it collapses into a violent beam of force that smites the source of the *dispel* for 4d4 hp damage and subjects all worn or carried items to crushing blow saving throws.

Guardian Trumpet

(Conjuration/Summoning)

Level: 7

Range: 300 yards

Components: V

Duration: Special

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: Special

This spell protects a chosen area of fluid dimensions but a maximum volume of 40 cubic feet (typically placed to fill the floors, walls, ceiling, and intervening air at a door, landing, window, or narrow section of passage). It can be set to end at wall surfaces or, if volume permits, to penetrate behind them, and so catch burrowing creatures, or those that try to pass within the thickness of a wall.

A *guardian trumpet* doesn't activate until a creature other than the caster or a single other specified being (who must be touched during the spellcasting) enters its protected area, though its caster can deactivate and reactivate it an unlimited number of times by uttering a secret word while within its confines. The first time an intrusion occurs, the *guardian trumpet* activates.

There is no known way to make a
Continued on page 60

There's the School
of Hard Knocks
and then there's...



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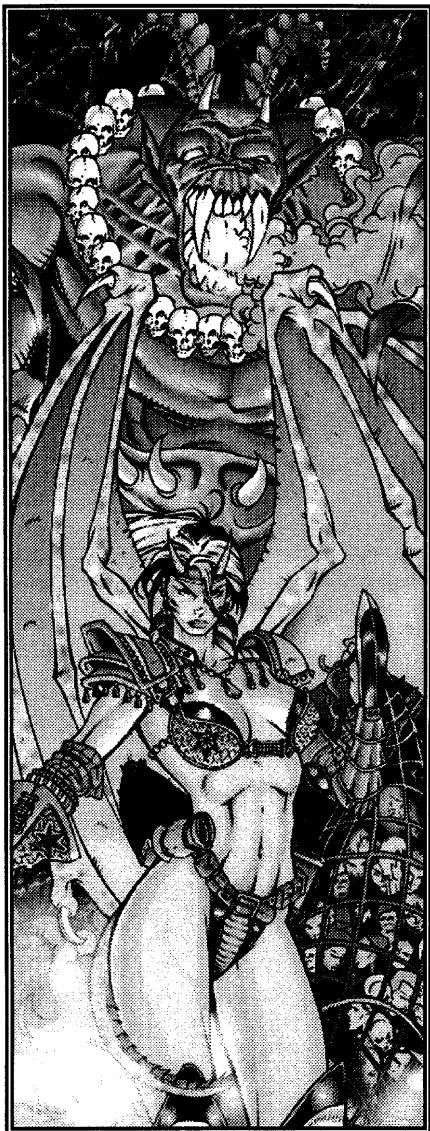
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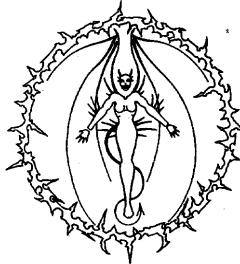
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guardian trumpet spell that protects against multiple intrusions, and only one such spell can affect a given area at a given time, but several such spells could be cast so as to affect adjacent areas of corridor. The intrusion of a creature already under the effects of one *guardian trumpet* spell won't cause another *trumpet* spell to activate. If two *guardian trumpet* spells are cast so that their protected areas overlap, the area where both spells have an effect is deemed "dead" to both spells; neither will function there.

When a *guardian trumpet* spell activates, an alarm (a sound or sounds of up to ten seconds in duration, made by the caster during the casting of the *guardian trumpet*) sounds in two places: a chosen spot (a cubical area 10' on a side) within spell range and in the ears of the caster, who may be anywhere on the same plane and still hear the trumpet warning.

The intruding creature is then allowed a saving throw, at a penalty of 1 per level or hit dice possessed by the creature that is less than the caster of the *guardian trumpet*. If it succeeds, the spell has no further effect, but if it fails, the intruding creature glows with a vivid *faerie fire* (hue of the trumpet-caster's choice) that withstands changes in shape or disguises, and their location is mentally communicated ("felt") by the trumpet-caster on a continuing basis, so that the caster can trace a moving intruder through various rooms and areas. These latter two effects persist for one turn from when the trumpet is activated (unless ended earlier by *dispel magic* or an equivalent spell).

Icy Claw

(Alteration)

Level: 7

Range: 60 yards

Components: V

Duration: 1 round

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: 30' x 30'

Saving Throw: 1/2

This spell creates a wraithlike, faintly-glowing cloud of white vapors. It swirls about within its area of effect, coalescing a visible white claw (four taloned digits roughly 3' long and 2' across) whenever an intruder enters its area of effect. Multiple intruders generate multiple claws, one to each.

An "intruder" is any creature of one of three species chosen by the caster of the *icy claw* spell during its casting, except specific individuals who are present and

touched by the caster during the casting. Typically an *icy claw* spell guards against humans, orcs, and halflings, with the exception of its caster and guards, tenants, or owners of a protected area. Creatures of other species (for example, guardian monsters) can pass through the *icy claw* cloud without suffering any effects — even while the cloud is battling other beings.

For each round in which an intruder is in contact with any part of the cloud, its *icy claw* strike twice at him at THAC0 7, dealing 3d4 hp damage per strike (a successful saving throw results in half damage, rounding fractions down). For every attack that is not saved against, the victim feels a chill; any creature who accumulates four of these during the same day (24 hours, or 144 turns) is affected as if by a *hold monster* spell of one turn duration (no saving throw allowed).

Typically an *icy claw* spell is cast in an antechamber between two locked, louvered doors, so that intruders must suffer its effects while they force both doors.

Deszeldaryndun's Fate

Silver-wing is still vigorous and growing in power, but his selfless devotion to his Dragon Queen and his deep friendships various lone humans in need of aid in the North are likely to bring about his eventual doom — fighting against evil to defend the things he finds precious. As Elminster remarked, that's a fate to be proud of.

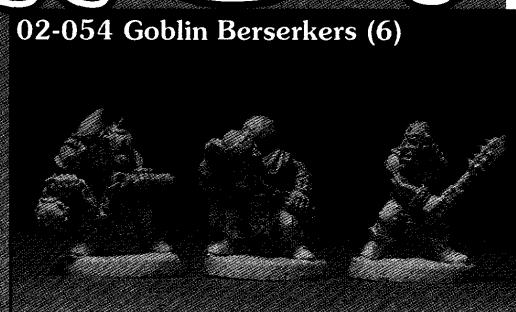


Ed Greenwood works in a library in North York, Ontario, where he daily sees "people who ought to be in the Realms." So he writes novels - and puts them there. (As to who's based on whom, he reminds us of the words of Khelben: "There are never prizes for piercing disguises.")

Goblins!

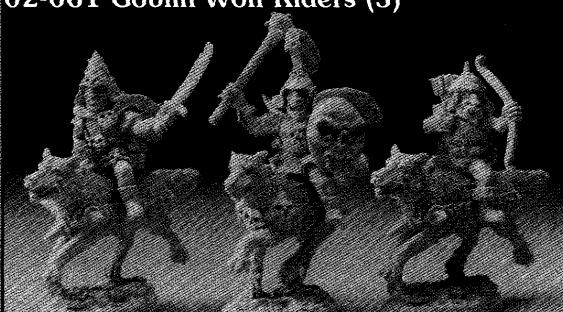
02-049 Goblin Command (4)

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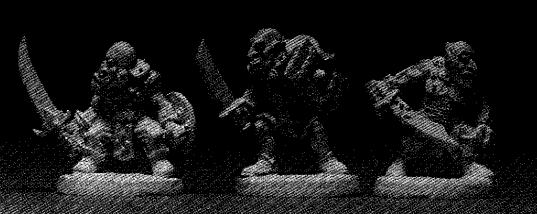
02-051 Goblin Spearmen (6)

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The murmur and cackle of uncouth laughter..The pad of soft booted feet and paws...The creak of leather harnesses and wooden wheels...And what the heck is that smell?!? The Goblins are on the march again (no surprise there!) and they're staging their bid for conquest from Ral Partha.



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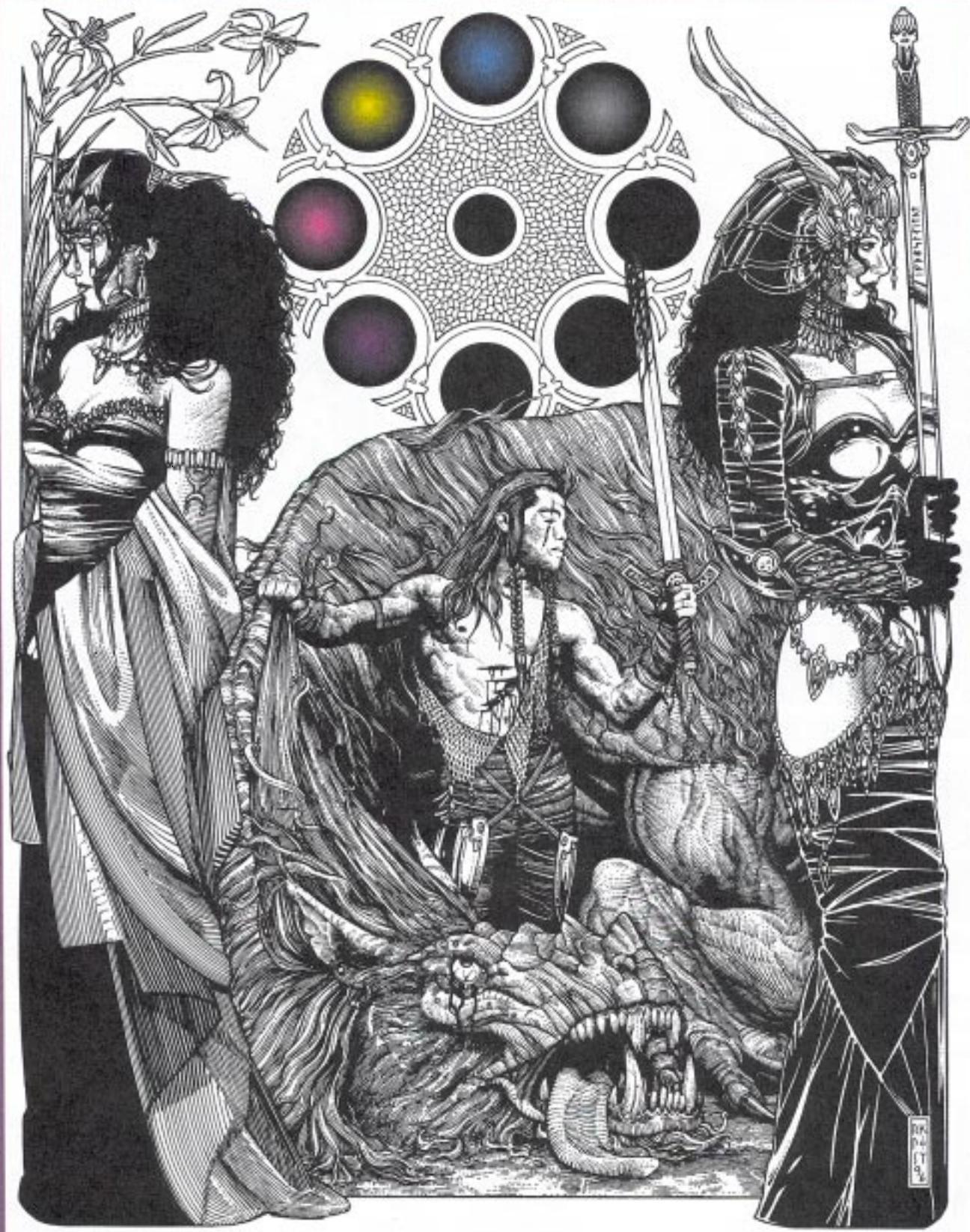
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This Army grouping
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LEGENDARY HEROES

Ben Bova

Artwork by R.K. Post



or the first time that bitterly cold winter, Heorot was bright again, ringing with song and a king's gratitude to the hero.

And then the beast roared, out in the icy darkness.

"But he's dead!" King Hrothgar bellowed, pointing to the shaggy monster's arm that now was affixed over the mead-hall's entrance doorway.

"I killed him," exclaimed Beowulf, "with these bare hands."

Hrothgar turned to his queen, Wealhtheow, sitting beside him on the dais between the royal torches. She was as beautiful as a starry spring night, her raven-dark hair tumbling past her shoulders, her lustrous gray eyes focused beyond the beyond.

Wealhtheow was a seer. Gripping the carved arms of her throne, shuddering under the spell of her magic, she pronounced in a hollow voice, "The monster is truly dead. Now its mate has come to claim vengeance upon us."

Hrothgar turned as white as his beard. His thanes, who had been sloshing mead and singing their old battle songs, fell into the silence of cold terror.

The captives from Britain huddled together in sudden fear in the far corner of the hall. I could see the dread in their faces. Hrothgar had planned to sacrifice them to his gods if Beowulf had not killed the monster. For a few brief hours they had thought they would be freed. Now the horror had returned.

I turned to gaze upon the lovely Queen Wealhtheow. She was much younger than Hrothgar, yet her divine gray eyes seemed to hold the wisdom of eternity. And she was staring directly at me.

How and why I was in Heorot I had no idea. I could remember nothing beyond the day we had arrived on the Scylding shore, pulling on the oars of our longboat against the freezing spray of the tide.

My name was Orion, that much I knew. And I served Beowulf, hero of the Geats, who had sailed to far-off Daneland to kill the monster that had turned timbered Heorot, the hall of the stag, from King Hrothgar's great pride to his great sorrow.

For months the monster had stalked Heorot, striking by night when the warriors had drunk themselves into mead-besotted dreams. At length none would enter the great hall, not even stubborn old Hrothgar himself. Until Beowulf arrived with the fourteen of us and loudly proclaimed that he would kill the beast that very night.

Beowulf was a huge warrior, two ax handles across the shoulders, with flaxen braids to his waist and eyes as clear blue as the icy water of a fiord. Strength he had, and courage. Also, he was a boaster of unparalleled brashness.

The very night he came to Heorot with his fourteen companions he swaggered so hard that narrow-eyed Unferth, the most cunning of the Scylding thanes, tried to take him down a peg. Beowulf bested him in a bragging contest and won the roars of Hrothgar's mead-soaked companions.

After midnight Hrothgar and his Scyldings left the hall. The torches were put out, the hearth fire sank to low, glowering embers. It was freezing cold; I could hear the wind moaning outside. Beowulf and the rest of us stretched out to sleep. My shirt of chain mail felt like ice against my skin. I dilated my peripheral blood vessels and increased my heart rate, to make myself warmer, without even asking myself how I knew to do this.

I had volunteered to stay awake and keep watch. I could go for days without sleep and the others were glad to let me do it. We had all drunk many tankards of honey-sweetened mead, yet my body burned away its effects almost immediately. I felt alert, aware, strong.

Through the keening wind and bitter chill I could sense the monster shambling about in the night outside, looking for more victims to slaughter.

I sat up and grasped my sword an instant before the beast burst through the massive double doors of the mead-hall, snarling and slavering. The others scattered in every direction, shrieking, eyes wide with fear.

I felt terror grip my heart, too. As I stared at the approaching monster I recalled a giant cave bear, in another time, another life. It had ripped me apart with its razor-sharp claws. It had crushed my bones in its fanged jaws. It had killed me.

Beowulf leaped to his feet and charged straight at the monster. It rose onto its hind legs, twice the height of a warrior, and knocked Beowulf aside with a swat of one mighty paw. His sword went flying out of his hand as he landed flat on his back with a thud that shook the pounded-earth floor.

Everything seemed to slow down into a dreamy, sluggish lethargy. I saw Beowulf scrambling to his feet, but slowly, languidly, as if he moved through a thick invisible quagmire. I could see the beasts eyes moving in his head, globs of spittle forming between his pointed teeth and dropping slowly, slowly to the earthen floor.

Beowulf charged again, bare-handed this time. The monster focused on him, spread its forelegs out as if to embrace this pitiful fool and then crush

him. I ducked beneath those sharp-clawed paws and rammed my sword into the beasts belly, up to the hilt, and then hacksawed upward.

Blood spurted over me. The monster bellowed with pain and fury and knocked me sideways across the hall. Beowulf leaped on its back, as languidly as in a dream. The others were gathering their senses now, hacking at the beast with their swords. I got to my feet just as the brute dropped ponderously back onto all fours and started for the shattered door, my sword still jammed into its gut.

One of the men got too close, and the monster snatched him in its jaws and crushed the life out of him. I shook at the memory, but I took up Beowulf's dropped sword and swung as hard as I could at the beast's shoulder. The blade hit bone and stuck. The beast howled again and tried to shake Beowulf off its back. He pitched forward, grabbed at the sword sticking in its shoulder, and wormed it through the tendons of the joint like a butcher carving a roast.

Howling, the monster shook free of him again, but Beowulf clutched its leg while the rest of us hacked away. Blood splattered everywhere, men roared and screamed.

And then the beast shambled for the door, with Beowulf still clutching its leg. The leg tore off and the monster stumbled out into the night, howling with pain, its life's blood spurting from its wounds.

That was why we feasted and sang at Heorot the following night. Until the beasts mate roared its cry of vengeance against us.

"I raid the coast of Britain," Hrothgar cried angrily, "and sack the cities of the Franks. Yet in my own hall I must cower like a weak woman!"

"Fear not, mighty king," Beowulf answered bravely. "Just as I killed the monster will I slay its mate. And this time I will do it alone!"

Absolute silence fell over Heorot.

Then the king spoke. "Do this and you can have your choice of reward. Anything in my kingdom will be yours!"

Before Beowulf could reply, sly Unferth spoke up. "You have no sword, mighty warrior."

"It was carried off by the dying monster," Beowulf said.

"Here then, take mine." Unferth unbuckled the sword at his waist and handed it to the hero.

Beowulf pulled the blade from its scabbard and whistled it through the air. "A good blade and true. I will return it to you, Unferth, with the monster's blood on it."

Everyone shouted approval, even the British captives. There were an even dozen of them: eleven young boys and girls, none yet in their teens, and a

wizened old man with big, staring eyes and a beard even whiter than Hrothgar's.

The monster roared outside again, and silenced the cheers.

Beowulf strode to the patched-up door of the mead hall, Unferth's sword in his mighty right hand.

"Let no one follow me!" he cried.

No one did. We all stood stunned and silent as he marched out into the dark. I turned slightly and saw that Unferth was smiling cruelly, his lips forming a single word: "Fool."

"Orion." Queen Wealhtheow called my name.

She stepped down from the royal dais and walked through the crowd toward me. The others seemed frozen, like statues, staring sightlessly at the door. Hrothgar did not move, did not even breathe, as his queen approached me. The Scylding thanes, Beowulf's other companions, even the frightened British captives — none of them blinked or breathed or twitched.

"They are in stasis, Orion," Wealhtheow said as she came within arm's reach of me. "They can neither see nor hear us."

Those infinite gray eyes of hers seemed to show me worlds upon worlds, lifetimes I had led — we had led together — in other epochs, other world-lines.

"Do you remember me, Orion?"

"I love you," — whispered, knowing it was true. "I have loved you through all of spacetime."

"Yes, my love. What more do you remember?"

It was like clawing at a high smooth stone wall. I shook my head. "Nothing. I don't even know why I'm here — why you're here."

"You remember nothing of the Creators? Of your previous missions?"

"The Creators." Vaguely I recalled godlike men and women. "Aten."

"Yes," she said. "Aten."

He created me and sent me through spacetime to do his bidding. Haughty and mad with power, he called me his tool, his hunter. More often I was an assassin for him.

"I remember . . . the snow, the time of eternal cold." But it was all like the misty tendrils of a dream, wafting away even as I reached for them.

"I was with you then," she said.

"The cave bear. It killed me." I could feel the pain of my ribs being crushed, hear my own screams drowned in spouting blood.

"You've lived many lives."

"And died many deaths."

"Yes, my poor darling. You have suffered much." She was one of the Creators, I realized. I loved a

goddess. And she loved me. Yet we were destined to be torn away from each other, time and again, over the eons and lightyears of the continuum.

"This beast that ravaged Heorot was not a natural animal," she told me. "It was engendered and controlled by one of the Creators."

"Which one? Aten?"

She shook her head. "It makes no difference. I am here to see that the beast does not succeed. You must help me."

Deep in my innermost memories I recalled that the Creators squabbled among themselves like spoiled children. They directed the course of human history and sent minions such as me to points in spacetime to carry out their whims. Many times I have killed for Aten, and many times have I died for him. Yet he brings me back, sneering at my pains and fears, and sends me out again.

I am powerless to resist his commands — he thinks. But more than once I have defied his wishes. At Troy I helped Odysseos and his Achaians to triumph. Deep in interstellar space I led whole fleets against him.

"Has Aten sent me here, or have you?" I asked her.

She smiled at me, a smile that could warm a glacier. "I have brought you here, Orion, to help Beowulf slay both monsters."

"Is Beowulf one of your creatures?"

She laughed. "That bragging oaf? No, my darling, he is as mortal as a blade of grass."

"But why is this important?" I asked. "Why has your enemy used these beasts to attack Heorot?"

"That I will explain after you have helped Beowulf to kill the second monster."

"If I live through the ordeal," I said, feeling sullen, resentful.

"My poor darling. I ask so much of you. If I could do this myself, I would."

Then she kissed me swiftly on the lips. I would have faced an entire continent filled with monsters for her.

The tingle of her lips on mine had not yet faded when the others around us stirred to life once again. And Wealhtheow was somehow back on her throne, on the dais beside her husband, aged Hrothgar.

Her husband. The thought burned in me. Then I realized that one of the men in this timbered mead-hall was one of the Creators, in disguise, controlling the monsters that killed Hrothgar's warriors. Why? What was the purpose of it all?

That was not for me to know. Not yet. My task was clear. The king and queen left the mead-hall, heading back to Hrothgar's fortress. The others

milled about for a while, then started back through the frigid winter night also.

It was easy for me to slip away from them and start down the rocky trail that led to the sea. The moon scudded in and out of low dark clouds. In its fitful light I could clearly see the spoor of dark blood that the dying monster had left from the night before. This is the track Beowulf was following. I hurried along it.

The blood spoor ended at the sea, where the waves crashed against the craggy headland. Our longboat was still tucked up on the rocks, I saw, its mast stored along the deck. No one guarded it. There was no need. The boat was under Hrothgar's protection; no Scylding would dare touch it.

Bitter cold it was, with a wind coming off the sea that sliced through my chain mail shirt and chilled me to the bone despite my conscious control of my blood circulation.

The rocky cove stretched out to my left. In the moonlit shadows I thought I saw caves in among the rocks at the cove's far end. The den of the monster, perhaps.

A growling roar, like the rumble of distant thunder, came across the icy wind. I raced across the rocks toward the caves.

The second cave was the monster's den, half awash with the incoming tide, dimly lit by phosphorescent patches of lichen clinging to the rock walls.

The beast was even bigger than the first one, glowing faintly white in the dimly-lit cave, snarling at Beowulf as it reared up on its hind legs. Even mighty Beowulf looked like a pitiful dwarf next to its enormous size.

He was already bleeding from shoulder to waist, his chain mail shirt in shreds from the beast's raking claws. He clutched Unferth's sword in both hands and swung mightily at the monster, to no avail. It was like hitting the brute with a tress of hair.

The monster knocked Beowulf to his knees with a blow that would have crushed a normal man. His sword blade snapped in half. And I realized that Unferth had given Beowulf a useless weapon. Crafty Unferth with his glittering reptilian eyes was the other Creator among the Scyldings.

I ran toward the beast and again the world seemed to slow into dreamy, languid motion.

"Beowulf!" I shouted. "Here!"

I threw my own sword to him. It spun lazily through the air. He caught it in one massive hand and scrabbled away from the monster on his knees.

I circled around to the side away from Beowulf, trying to draw the brute's attention before it killed the hero of the Geats. Out of the corner of my eye I

saw a gleaming hoard of treasure: gold coins and jewels heaped on the dank cave floor. Swords and warriors' armor, spears and helmets were strewn in profusion. The monsters had brought their kills here for many years.

The beast ignored the kneeling Beowulf and bellowed at me, dropping to all fours as it moved to protect its hoard. But it moved slowly, as if in a dream. I dashed to the pile of weapons and pulled out the first sword I could reach.

Barely in time. The monster was almost on top of me. I slashed at his slavering jaws and it howled in pain and fury. I feinted sideways, then stepped back — and tripped on a helmet lying at my feet.

Off-balance, I staggered backward. The beast swung at me. I could see those razor-sharp claws coming, but there was nothing I could do to stop them. The blow knocked me onto my back. The monster's jaws reached for me, teeth like a row of swords. I clutched my own sword in both hands and rammed it upward into the beast's open mouth, but it did no good. Its teeth closed around me. I was going to be crushed to death, just as I had been all those long eons ago.

But the monster suddenly howled and dropped me. It turned to face Beowulf, bleeding, battered, but hacking at the beast's flank with the fury of a b e r s e r k e r .

As the brute turned away from me, I scrambled to my feet and thrust my sword into its neck, angling it upward to find the brain or spine.

It collapsed so suddenly that it nearly smothered Beowulf. For long moments we both stood on tottering legs, gasping for breath, spattered with our own blood and the monster's, staring down at its enormous carcass.

Then Beowulf looked up and grinned at me. "Help me take off its head," he said.

It was pearly-pink dawn when we staggered out of the cave. Beowulf carried the monster's gigantic shaggy head on his shoulder as lightly as if it were a bit of gossamer.

We blinked at the morning light. Icy waves lapped at our ankles.

Beowulf turned to me, his cocky grin gone. "Orion, I told Hrothgar before all his thanes that I would kill the monster myself, with no one's help."

I nodded, but said nothing.

Suddenly his broad, strong face took on the expression of a guilty little boy's. "Will you go on ahead and say that you searched for me, but could not find me? Then I can come later with the beast's head."

I glanced down at my bloody arms. "And my wounds?"

"Say you were set upon by wolves as you searched in the night for me."

I smiled at his stupid pride, but said, "Yes, I will do it."

"Good," Beowulf said. He dropped the monster's head and sat on a rock. "I will rest here for a while. I could use some sleep."

So it was that I returned to Hrothgar's fortress and told the king that I had searched for Beowulf to no avail. All that long morning and well past noon we waited in growing gloom. Unferth said confidently that the monster had killed Beowulf.

He was considerably disheartened when the hero of the Geats finally arrived — with the monster's shaggy head on his wounded shoulder.

That night the feasting at Heorot was without stint. The torches flamed, the mead flowed, the thanes sang praises of Beowulf and the women vied for his merest glance. Hrothgar's bard began to compose a saga. The king promised the British captives that they would be ransomed and returned to their dank, dreary island.

Only Unferth seemed unhappy, slinking in the shadows and glaring at me.

Queen Wealhtheow sat on her throne, smiling graciously at the uproarious celebration. Long past midnight, the king and queen left the mead-hall. Warriors and even churls paired off with women and strolled off into the darkness.

At last timbered Heorot fell silent. The torches were extinguished. The hearth fire burned low. I was left alone, so I stretched out on the earthen floor next to the fading embers and willed myself to sleep.

I dreamed, yet it was not a dream. I was standing in another place, perhaps a different universe altogether. There was no ground, no sky, only a silver glow like moonlight that pervaded everything. Wealhtheow stood before me, but now she wore a form-fitting outfit of glittering silver metal. A warrior goddess, she was.

"You did well, Orion," she said in a low voice.

"Thank you."

"Your wounds?"

"They are already healing," I said.

"Yes, accelerated self-repair was built into you."

I wanted to reach out and take her in my arms, but I could not.

Instead, I asked, "Can we be together now?"

In the deepest recess of my memory I recalled a time, a lovely woodland filled with tame, graceful animals that we called Paradise, when we were together and happy. The other Creators, especially the jealous Aten, had torn her away from me.

"Not yet, my love," she said, with a sadness in her eyes that matched my own despair. "Not yet."

"At least, can I know why I was sent to Heorot? Why was it important to slay those beasts?"

"To save the British captives, of course."

That surprised me. "The captives? Those pimply-faced youngsters and that emaciated old man?"

She smiled knowingly. "One of those pimply-faced youngsters is the son of a Roman who stayed behind after the legions left Britain. His name is Artorius."

I shrugged. It made no sense to me.

"He will be important one day. A light against the darkness." She reached out her hand to me. "The sword you found in the cave. Please give it to me."

Puzzled, I detached the scabbarded sword from my belt and handed it to her. She slowly drew out the blade, examined the inscription on it, and smiled.

"Yes," she said in a whisper, "he will need this later on."

I read the one word inscribed on the matchless steel blade.

Excalibur.



Dr. Ben Bova started writing fiction in the late 1940s and has been at it ever since, even while pursuing careers in journalism, aerospace, education, and publishing.

Author of more than eighty futuristic novels and non-fiction books, Dr. Bova became involved with the U.S. space program two years before the creation of NASA. He was editor of Analog and Omni magazines, has written teaching films with Nobel laureate scientists, and is president emeritus of the National Space Society and a past president of Science-fiction and Fantasy Writers of America. He has won six Hugo awards.

He has worked with Woody Allen, George Lucas, and Gene Roddenberry on film and television projects, and he has been a regular science guest on CBS Morning News. He lectures on topics ranging from the craft of writing fiction to the search for extraterrestrial intelligence.

His novels, such as Brothers, Mars, and Death Dream, combine romance, adventure, and the highest degree of scientific accuracy to explore the impact of future technological developments on individual human beings and on society as a whole. His latest novel, Moonrise, tells the story of the first people to live permanently on the Moon.



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Rifts® World Book 12: Psyscape™ Rescheduled for Spring 1997

In order to keep the rest of Palladium's 1996 titles on schedule (including Rifts® Lone Star, Rifts® New West, Rifts® Spirit West, as well as Nightlands and Dragons & Gods), Palladium has rescheduled Psyscape™ for a Spring, 1997 release. Since the book has been advertised as Rifts® World Book 12, it will retain that numerical distinction but will actually follow the release of World Book 15: Rifts® Spirit West (scheduled for a March 1997 release). We hope our fans understand. Thanks.

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You may also fax your survey to the attention of Cindy Rick at 414-248-0389.

Be sure to include your name and full address, so we can send you your free poster right away.

Thanks for your help in making *DRAGON Magazine* the greatest gaming magazine available!

1. Year of birth: _____
2. Gender:
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
3. Marital Status:
 - a. Single
 - b. Married
4. How many years of education do you have? _____
5. Are you employed?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
6. What is your yearly income?
 - a. Under \$20,000
 - b. \$20,001-\$40,000
 - c. \$40,001 and up
7. Are you interested in (rate your top three interests):
 - a. Science Fiction
 - b. Fantasy
 - c. Horror
 - d. Mystery
 - e. Comics
 - f. Collectible Card Games
 - g. Sports/Entertainment Cards
 - h. Role-Playing Games
8. What leisure activities do you participate in?
 - a. Music
 - b. Electronic Games
 - c. Concerts
 - d. Drawing/Art
 - e. Sports
 - f. Photography
 - g. Fitness
 - h. Board Games
 - i. Card Games
 - j. RPGs
 - k. Reading
 - l. Other
9. Do you collect any of the following?
 - a. Art prints
 - b. CCG Cards
 - c. Sports Cards
 - d. Other Cards
 - e. Star Trek Items
 - f. Star Wars Items
 - g. Franklin Mint Items
 - h. Comics
 - i. RPGs
 - j. Board Games
 - k. Other Items
10. Are you a fan of any of the following?
 - a. Star Trek
 - b. Star Wars
 - c. X-Files
 - d. Hercules/Xena
 - e. Dr. Who
11. Are you a subscriber of *DRAGON Magazine*?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
12. What other types of magazines do you read/subscribe to?
 - a. Fantasy
 - b. Science Fiction
 - c. Horror
 - d. Music
 - e. News
 - f. Role-Playing
 - g. Movie/Entertainment
 - h. Other
13. If you are not a subscriber, where do you purchase your copies of *DRAGON Magazine*?
 - a. Book Store
 - b. Hobby/Gaming Store
 - c. Comics Store
 - d. Other
14. If you are not a subscriber, how often do you purchase *DRAGON Magazine*?
 - a. 1-2 issues
 - b. 3-4 issues
 - c. 5-6 issues
 - d. 7-8 issues
 - e. 9-10 issues
 - f. 11-12 issues
15. How many people read your copy of *DRAGON Magazine*?
 - a. 1
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5
 - f. 6 or more
16. How much time do you spend reading *DRAGON Magazine*?
 - a. 1/2 Hour
 - b. 1 Hour
 - c. 1 1/2 Hours
 - d. 2 Hours
 - e. Over 2 Hours
17. What do you do with *DRAGON Magazine* after you have finished reading it?
 - a. Put it in your collection
 - b. Save it for future reading
 - c. Give it away
 - d. Recycle it
18. What kind of computer equipment do you or your family own?
 - a. None
 - b. PC (IBM Compatibles) 286
 - c. PC (IBM Compatibles) 386/486
 - d. Apple/Mac
 - e. CD ROM Drive
 - f. Modem
 - g. Sound Card
 - h. Standard Pentium 586
 - i. Enhanced Pentium P55C
19. What kind of video game equipment do you or your family own?
 - a. Sega Genesis
 - b. Gameboy
 - c. Nintendo
 - d. SuperNintendo
 - e. Game Gear
 - f. Atari/Lynx
 - g. Sega Saturn
 - h. Playstation
 - i. 3DO
 - j. Jaguar
 - k. Other
 - l. None
20. What type of computer games do you play?
 - a. Action
 - b. Strategy
 - c. Fantasy
 - d. Science Fiction
21. How much do you spend on computer/video games per month?
 - a. \$0-\$20
 - b. \$21-\$40
 - c. \$41-\$60
 - d. \$61-\$80
 - e. \$81 or more
22. Do you belong to any mail-order clubs?
 - a. Book:
 - 1. Mystery
 - 2. Science Fiction
 - 3. Doubleday
 - 4. Literary Guild
 - 5. Other
 - b. Video
 - c. Cassette/CD
 - 1. BMG

2. Columbia House
 3. Other

23. In order, list your favorite three card games:
 1 - Most favored
 2 - Second most favored
 3 - Third most favored
 a. Magic: The Gathering
 b. SPELLFIRE®
 c. Star Trek
 d. Star Wars
 e. Rage
 f. Overpower
 g. Highlander
 h. Middle Earth
 i. Legend of the Rings
 j. Mythos
 k. Middle Earth
 l. Shadowfist
 m. Other

24. In order, list your three favorite RPGs:
 1 - Most Favored
 2 - Second most Favored
 3 - Third most favored
 a. AD&D®
 b. Star Wars
 c. Shadowrun
 d. Earthdawn
 e. Call of Cthulhu
 f. Cyberpunk
 g. GURPS
 h. Castle Falkenstein
 i. Mechwarrior
 j. Warhammer
 k. Champions
 l. Battletech
 m. Middle Earth
 n. Pendragon
 o. Vampire
 p. Highlander
 q. Other

25. How much do you spend on RPG gaming products per month?
 a. Under \$10
 b. \$10-\$20
 c. \$21-\$30
 d. \$31-\$40
 e. \$41-\$50
 f. \$50 and up

26. Where do you purchase your RPG gaming products?
 a. Book Stores
 b. Hobby/Game Stores
 c. Comic Book Stores
 d. Mail Order
 e. Other

27. How often do you visit the store?
 a. Daily
 b. Weekly
 c. Bi-Weekly
 d. Monthly
 e. Bi-Monthly
 f. Every 6 Months
 g. Yearly

28. How many books do you read per year?
 a. 1-2
 b. 3-4
 c. 5-6
 d. 7-8
 e. 9-10
 f. 11 or more

29. What types of books are you interested in?
 a. Fantasy
 b. Game Fiction
 c. Horror
 d. Science Fiction
 e. Mystery
 f. Media-related Non-fiction

30. How many books have you purchased in the last 30 days?
 a. 1-2
 b. 3-4
 c. 5-6
 d. 7-8
 e. 9-10
 f. More than 10

31. Do you read comic books?
 a. Yes
 b. No

32. How many comic books have you purchased in the past 30 days?
 a. less than 10
 b. 10-19
 c. 20-29
 d. 30-39
 e. 40-49
 f. 50-59
 g. 60-69
 h. over 70

33. How do you use miniatures?
 a. Role-playing
 b. Display
 c. Wargaming
 d. Don't use

34. How much do you spend on miniatures per month?
 a. Under \$10
 b. \$11-\$20
 c. \$21-\$30
 d. \$31-\$40
 e. \$41-\$50
 f. over \$50

35. How often do you attend movies?
 a. Once a week
 b. Once a month
 c. 2-3 times a month
 d. Less than once a month

36. How many videos have you rented in the last 90 days?
 a. 1-2
 b. 3-4
 c. 5-6
 d. 7-8
 e. 9-10
 f. More than 10

37. What types of movies/videos have you seen in the last 90 days?
 a. Science Fiction/Fantasy
 b. Comedy
 c. Adventure/War
 d. Suspense/Mystery
 e. Crime/Detective Drama
 f. Westerns
 g. Other

38. Do you own any of the following?
 a. Cassette Recorder/Player
 b. Portable Radio/Tape Player
 c. Compact Disc Player
 d. Video Cassette Recorder/Player
 e. Camcorder/Video Camera
 f. Laser Disc Player
 g. DVD Player

39. How many Cassettes/CDs have you purchased in the last 90 days?
 a. 1-2
 b. 3-4
 c. 5-6
 d. 7-8
 e. 9-10
 f. More than 10

40. Where did you purchase your Cassettes/CDs?
 a. Department Store
 b. Video Store
 c. Discount Store
 d. Audio/Electronic Store
 e. Mail Order
 f. TV Offer
 g. Clubs
 h. Other

41. In order, list your favorite department/column in *DRAGON Magazine*?
 1 - Most Favored
 2 - Second Most Favored
 3 - Third Most Favored
 a. Arcane Lore
 b. Bazaar of the Bazaar
 c. BOOKWYRMS™
 d. Campaign Classics
 e. Cons & Pros
 f. Current Clack
 g. D-MAIL™
 h. Dragon's Bestiary
 i. DragonMirth
 j. Dungeon Mastery
 k. Ecology Series
 l. Fiction
 m. Floyd
 n. Forum
 o. Game Wizards
 p. Knights of the Dinner Table
 q. Network News
 r. Rogues Gallery
 s. Role of Books
 t. Role-playing reviews
 u. Sage Advice
 v. TSR Previews
 w. Wyrm's Turn
 x. WYRMS OF THE NORTH™

42. In order, list your least favorite department/column in *DRAGON Magazine*?
 1 - Least Favored
 2 - Second Least Favored
 3 - Third Least Favored
 a. Arcane Lore
 b. Bazaar of the Bazaar
 c. BOOKWYRMS™
 d. Campaign Classics
 e. Cons & Pros
 f. Current Clack
 g. D-MAIL™
 h. Dragon's Bestiary
 i. DragonMirth
 j. Dungeon Mastery
 k. Ecology Series
 l. Fiction
 m. Floyd
 n. Forum
 o. Game Wizards
 p. Knights of the Dinner Table
 q. Network News
 r. Rogues Gallery
 s. Role of Books
 t. Role-playing reviews
 u. Sage Advice
 v. TSR Previews
 w. Wyrm's Turn
 x. WYRMS OF THE NORTH™

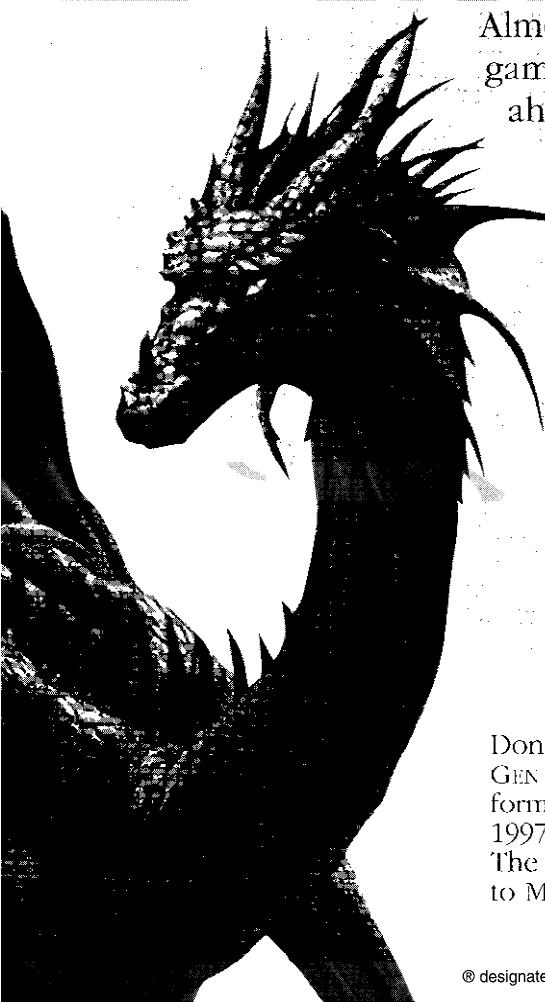


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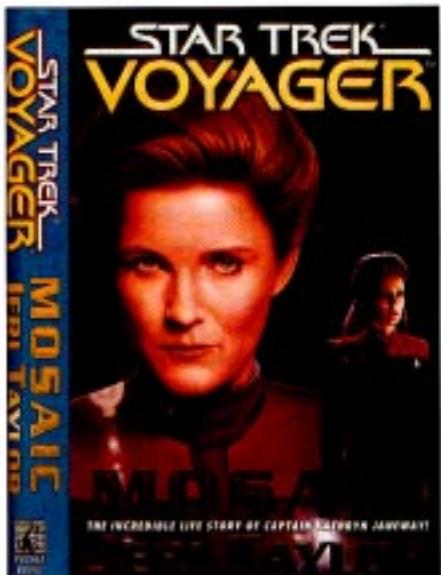
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the ROLE OF BOOKS

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\$22.00

If nothing else, *Mosaic* is certainly authoritative. As the letter enclosed with the advance galley says, "Who better to tell the story of *Star Trek*'s first female captain than the person who created her? Yet that very credibility makes this first hardcover chronicle of the U.S.S. *Voyager* a profoundly unsettling book — because if it's an accurate portrait of Captain Kathryn Janeway, an excellent case can be made that Janeway is one of the last people in the galaxy who belongs in command of a starship.

It's not that Jeri Taylor writes badly — far from it. In most cases she develops

her characters vividly and with a keen eye for detail. But what we see of Janeway is not a tale of a woman coming of age; rather, it's a story about a woman whose store of unresolved psychological problems rivals the selection of lemons on a busy used-car lot.

The Janeway of *Mosaic* is reckless; she re-enters a burning building, violates orders to explore a dangerous underwater cave system, and much later dives headlong into a firefight with a Cardassian warrior without regard for the consequences. She's consistently inept at reading character; the friends and co-workers she's slowest to trust invariably turn out to be the most stable and capable people around her. It doesn't help that Janeway loses most of these people over the course of the book — some die, some retire, and nearly all the rest end up half a galaxy away. Nor is Janeway a natural team player; she is happiest and most successful on her own, whether she's playing tennis, engaged in scientific research, or taking care of a puppy.

Our heroine also has enough sheer good luck to wear out a field full of four-leaf clovers. Granted, she also possesses considerable survival skills, but competence alone can't explain how Janeway avoids torture and death at Cardassian hands, or how she survives a shuttle crash that proves fatal to the shuttle's other two passengers. Much too often in the novel, Janeway gets through a situation purely by applying persistence or momentum rather than ability or insight.

Were *Mosaic* written by almost any other hand, all this could be put down to the author's misreading of Janeway's character. In Jeri Taylor's case, however, this simply isn't an option. Asserting that Taylor's portrayal of Janeway is somehow wrong would be like arguing that J.R.R. Tolkien didn't understand hobbits, or that Ed Greenwood shouldn't be trusted to write about Elminster of Shadowdale. Paramount's usual disclaimer about novels not being "canonical" loses force here; Taylor's depiction

of Janeway must, of necessity, be viewed as authoritative.

And therein lies the paradox. As a character study, *Mosaic* is incisive and powerful. Taylor knows her material and generally conveys it skillfully. Yet the Kathryn Janeway about whom Taylor writes seems an unlikely and illogical candidate for leadership. Readers are forced to conclude that the novel leaves out some critical turning point in Janeway's life — or else that the U.S.S. *Voyager* is being commanded by someone far less than qualified for the position.

Neither one of those prospects is a comforting thought. It's one thing, in the *Star Trek* universe, to have Cardassians or Kazon plotting disaster in the shadows. It's quite another to find that one of your favorite starship captains isn't what you thought she was.

The Glass Cat of Oz

David Hulan

Emerald City Press

\$9.95

Before the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting, before Conan's Hyperborea, before Middle-earth itself, there was Oz. Though L. Frank Baum's famous stories aren't often mentioned in role-playing circles, the world of Dorothy, Toto, Princess Ozma, and their compatriots is in many respects a direct ancestor of our modern adventuring milieus. And even less well known is the fact that a brand new series of Oz stories — David Hulan's *The Glass Cat of Oz* among them — has appeared in recent years, carrying on Baum's legends in classic style.

Hulan's story features a number of characters whom Oz fans will recall fondly from the original books. In addition to the Glass Cat, featured roles go to such well-remembered folk as Button-Bright, Trot and Cap'n Bill, and the Hungry Tiger. The plot also draws on well-established Oz lore, involving a scheme to overthrow the remote country of Oogaboo using weapons picked from its gun tree. Impressively, even the more obscure references and cast mem-

bers are handled with accuracy and respect; there are no off-key bobbles to detract from the characterizations.

But Hulan isn't merely rehashing old material. While all this is going on, he also introduces present-day youngsters Barry and Becky Klein, who find a genie's bottle on a California beach. Barry, it turns out, has read all the original Oz books (and enough other useful literature to sidestep the usual problems with genies and wishes). He and Becky are promptly transported to Oz and provided with a useful bit of magic, which they use to covertly attach themselves to the party dispatched to deal with affairs in Oogaboo.

Hulan handles the combination of old friends and modern ideas in smooth and entertaining fashion; Trot relies on magical aid to save herself from one difficult situation, while Becky cheerfully demonstrates the uses of karate and threatens to start a fashion revolution when she realizes that girls in Oz haven't discovered blue jeans.

The result is a lively and eminently likeable tale that brings the world of Oz firmly and agreeably into the 1990s. While *The Glass Cat of Oz* is fairly short compared to Baum's original books, its no less entertaining, and artist George O'Connor provides a lavish suite of illustrations in the style to which Oz fans have long been accustomed. Those who remember the original Oz books with pleasure should find David Hulan's tale a welcome addition to the canon, while those for whom Oz is a new discovery should find the volume a pleasant window into L. Frank Baum's world. The chief difficulty may lie in actually laying hands on this or other new volumes in the series; those who can't persuade a local bookseller to track down copies can contact the publisher at:

Emerald City Press
Books of Wonder
132 Seventh Avenue
New York, NY 10011

Kingmaker's Sword

Ann Marston
Harper Prism \$5.50

While *Kingmaker's Sword* is by no stretch of the imagination a historical fantasy, Ann Marston has done her homework in developing the setting. The names and cultures are clearly and plausibly adapted from various shades of Celtic, and while the lands portrayed are neither the British Isles nor a close alternate, the geography is just close

enough to make the Celtic borrowings feel at home. Thus while Marston delivers a compelling and wholly imaginary tale of lost heirs and misty magic, her inventions take on added substance by drawing on familiar cultural roots.

The broad flavor is that of an old-fashioned Scottish border war, with assorted clans striving for pre-eminence in a rugged land just emerging into prosperity. The physical trappings are mostly high medieval, with Druid-like magic pushing the period backward a century or so while a lively mercantile economy shoves it forward again.

Into this Marston introduces a handful of intriguing wild cards: Kian, a young man of mysterious ancestry who may or may not be the offspring of a long-lost princess; Kerridwen, herself the daughter of nobility, sent across the sea to find a missing prince; and the sword Kian carries, an enchanted blade that he wields skillfully yet shouldn't be able to use at all. The chemistry and repartee between Kian, Kerri, and Kian's adopted father Cullin is lively and beguiling, giving the tale a swashbuckling quality that also plays against the larger medieval backdrop.

While Marston's plot is squarely traditional — most readers will correctly deduce Kian's heritage at least a hundred pages before any of the characters work it out — she maintains a high degree of suspense by playing slightly against stereotype throughout. Kian's and Kerri's relationship is peppery and entertaining, yet convention notwithstanding, their eventual choices can't be easily anticipated. The scope of the political and martial intrigues is likewise far from predictable, and the meaning of a series of magical dream-interludes is appropriately shadowy.

Kingmaker's Sword is the first volume of a trilogy, and while Marston appears to have plans well laid for subsequent volumes, it doesn't stop her from wrapping this one up in concise and elegant style. While her leading characters are dealt with firmly and even-handedly, there's ample foundation for the tale to be picked up again in the next book.

Taken individually, there are few elements in Ann Marston's tale that readers won't have encountered before. Marston's virtue lies in her skillful and deft blending of familiar ingredients with solid worldbuilding, so that this first entry in the Rune Blade trilogy refreshes rather than seeming stale.

City of Diamond

Jane Emerson
DAW \$5.99

"Space opera" isn't quite the right designation for *City of Diamond*. Though there's no shortage of intrigue, counterplot and deception aboard the giant colony vessel that gives the book its title, there's also a faintly domestic quality usually missing from the wide-roving spectacle of the typical space opera. Nor are space operas usually possessed of characters as complex and introspective as some of those with whom pseudonymous author Jane Emerson populates this tale.

In some respects, "space soap opera" isn't far from an accurate description. As in traditional soap opera, there's a substantial cast that emphasizes a handful of intricately twined families. Young Adrian Mercati, who's just assumed overall leadership of the *Diamond* as the novel opens, heads one of these clans. His bride-to-be, one lolanthe, comes not only from a rival family but from the rival colony ship *City of Opal*. Then there's Spider, who begins the tale as a minor clerk but quickly finds himself involved in intrigues at the highest level. There's the half-alien Tal, called "demon," who's trying to find his family, and who's trusted by almost no one since mixed-species offspring nearly always have sociopathic tendencies. And there's Keylinn Gray, whose family by blood and choice alike is a mysterious order of contract servants whose abilities range from the academic to the deadly.

Then again, "war story" may be a better label. The two planets of the Baret star system are rushing toward armed conflict, and as that's where the *Diamond* is parked for much of the tale, the question of on whose side (if any) Adrian will intervene is a major plot issue. While Adrian faces the political implications of the confrontation, Tal and others find themselves potentially stranded on the front lines of the rising tide of battle.

And yet the war is only one of Adrian's worries. Someone on Baret Two may be guarding an alien relic of incalculable value to the *Diamond* — if he can find it before the *Opal*'s agents do. If Tal's quest for his roots succeeds, his relatives may destroy the colony ship purely for their own amusement; if it fails, Tal himself may yield to his darker side and kill Adrian in the process. And will lolanthe prove as docile and innocent as she

appears, or will she coldly betray Adrian's deepest secrets to his enemies aboard the *Opal*? Emerson infuses the novel with enough skullduggery to satisfy a whole guild of professional spies.

Pure adventure, however, is only a part of the tale's makeup. There's also a good deal of sophisticated ethical debate, courtesy of Tal and Keylinn Gray. Though Tal is at least as dangerous as his reputation suggests, he's also possessed of a curious personal code that may have more to do with honor than he'll admit, even to himself. Keylinn, meanwhile, must confront another sort of responsibility — not whether she will maintain her personal honor, but how she will balance her allegiances to her order, her contract-holder, and her own ideals.

Not surprisingly, the plethora of plots, subplots, and character arcs makes the novel a sizable volume. But while the size is a trifle intimidating, the prose is crisp, the tone amiable, and the pace never less than brisk. Emerson handles a host of viewpoint characters with surprising efficiency; even Keylinn's occasional first-person segments somehow fit into the much larger third-person narrative with no great difficulty.

But for all that *City of Diamond* is constructed with jigsaw-puzzle complexity, one need not be a puzzle enthusiast to enjoy the book. Anyone with a taste for solid storytelling against an interstellar backdrop should find Emerson's tale more than readable, whatever label one eventually assigns it.

And Peace Shall Sleep

Sonia Orin Lyris

HarperPrism

\$5.50

A year ago, *Magic: The Gathering* fiction was a growth industry, with two solid anthologies and a rapidly growing line of novels to its credit. Now, however, the flood has slowed to a trickle in the wake of changes at Wizards of the Coast, and it seems entirely possible that the novel series will fade out completely. That's a shame, because *And Peace Shall Sleep* may well be one of the most distinctive tie-in novels ever published in any gaming universe.

What's fascinating is that what Sonia Orin Lyris has written is neither an ordinary coming-of-age tale nor a typical quest yarn. Rather, it's a complicated chronicle of one man's attempts to maintain a political balance between the various races and governments in the gradually disintegrating realm of

Sarpadia. The story opens early in Dominaria's Ice Age, just as the elves of Havenwood abruptly dismiss Reod Dai from their covert service a full year before his contract is due to expire.

That's a problem, because the machinations in which Reod has been engaging are subtle and slow to resolve — and without the funds or backing to complete his strategic maneuvers, he can't hope to keep various orc and goblin forces from disrupting the region's long-term stability. But the elves won't listen, and by the time Reod has finished trying to salvage matters, virtually no one — not the orcs nor goblins, not elven nor dwarven elders, not even the dark Order of the Ebon Hand — is willing to trust his advice.

It's also a problem for a small family of dwarves who's been supplying Reod Dai with one of his most effective weapons: dragon eggs, which when properly enchanted can be used as highly effective bombs. Reod's inability to pay for the newest clutch of eggs isn't just an arms-race issue; it also means that there's a distinct chance that the eggs will hatch and that someone will have to deal with dragon whelps.

Sonia Orin Lyris develops her characters with sensitivity and thoughtfulness. Reod Dai is intense, persistent, and desperate to somehow salvage a situation in which he's made promises to a great many opposing sides. Then there's Sekena, the young dwarf girl who develops a peculiar bond with her draconic charges, and her sister Tamun, who seems to understand Reod's frustration despite having led a remote and sheltered life largely untouched by politics. Even the nastiest of Reod's many employers and contacts are portrayed as individuals, not merely villainous caricatures.

The result is a book that's very strange by game-novel standards. The pace isn't exactly slow, but neither is it quick; the effect is rather like crossing a deep chasm on a tightrope. The tension is constant, and it's impossible to retreat or stop once you've started. Nor is the core issue anything so abstract as good versus evil; given the scenario, some level of disaster is inevitable, and the best that readers can hope for is that Reod Dai can somehow minimize the impact of various small crises along the way.

This may not sound terribly exciting as game fiction goes, and indeed, those looking purely for rough and ready adventure may not find *And Peace Shall Sleep* to their taste. But as different as Lyris' novel is from the normal tie-in prod-

uct, it's nonetheless an absorbing and challenging tale, and the glimpse it provides into the Dominarian setting is vivid and compelling. Its publication is a credit both to Lyris and to the books' editorial sponsors at Wizards of the Coast — and it will be highly ironic if the novel turns out to be one of the last works of Magic fiction published under WotC's auspices.

Recurring Roles

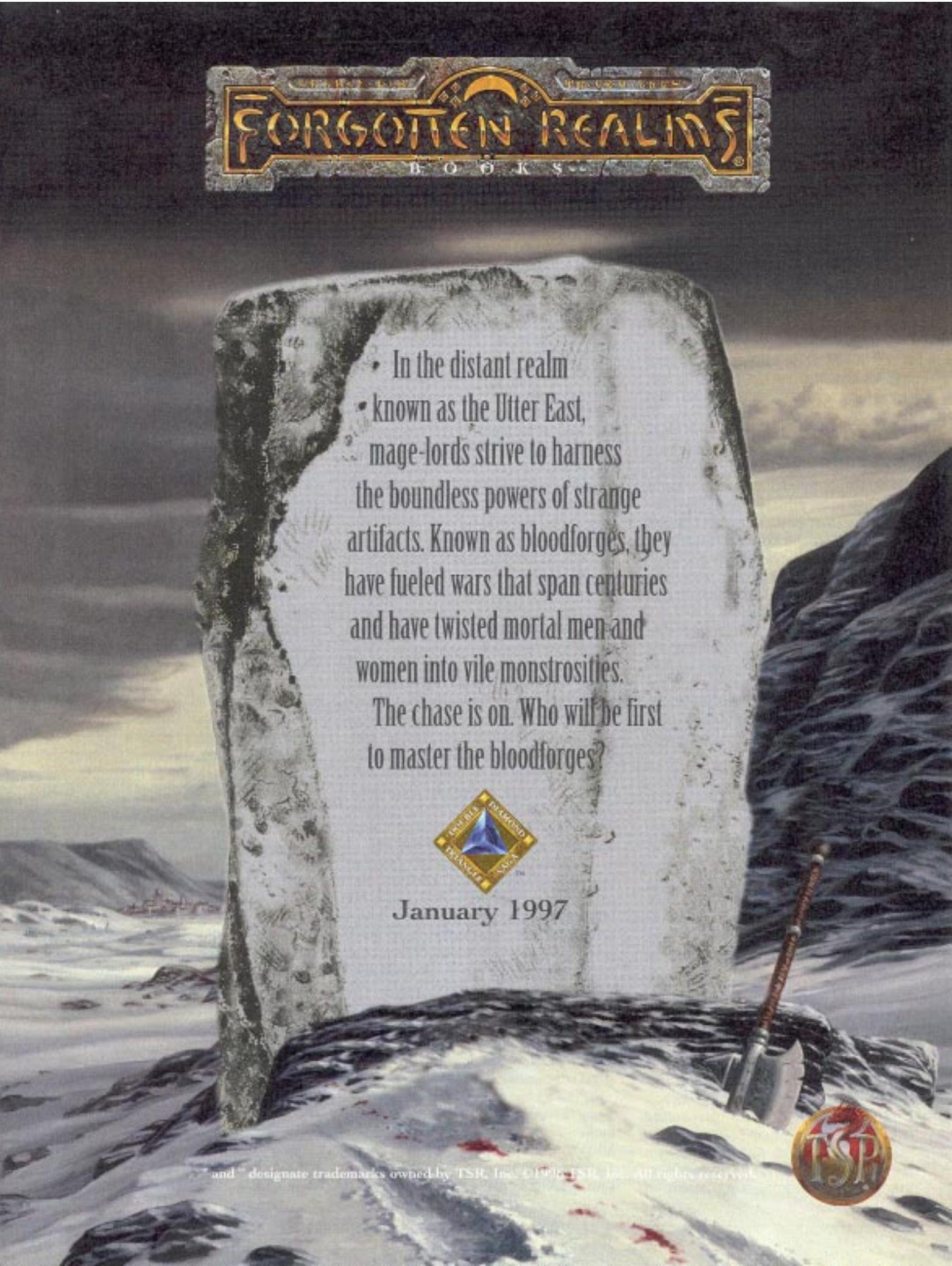
From a pleasant but relatively mild-mannered start, L. J. Smith's "Night World" teen horror series has shifted into high gear. Both *Daughters of Darkness* and *Spellbinder* (Pocket Archway, \$3.99 each) rank with Smith's best work; the former is a clever small-town vampires-and-werewolves mystery with a wicked sense of humor, and the latter is an equally barbed tale of teenaged witches feuding in Las Vegas. Smith is unmatched at putting utterly believable teenagers into high-powered magical conflicts, and the obligatory romantic elements are kept low-key enough so that adult readers won't find the tales overly saccharine.

A touch of the same balance of wit and youthful enthusiasm, albeit in a considerably more serious and complex mode, infuses *The Demons in the Green* (Avonova, \$5.99). This is Tom Deitz's sequel to *Above the Lower Sky* and Deitz's mix of near-future technology with mythological mysticism is as engaging as ever. The overall pace is quicker in this series than in Deitz's previous works, and it's easier to jump into this setting than to start one of Deitz's other series in the middle.

A brand new series, meanwhile, gets underway in Anne McCaffrey's *Freedom's Landing* (Ace, \$5.99). As with the Pern novels, our heroes are colonizing a new world—but this time we begin at the beginning, and the colonists are the exiled prisoners of a conquering alien race. What's more, where Pern was a virgin, mostly uninhabited world, there's a mysterious presence on this planet that even the Catteni overlords don't know about. This is vintage McCaffrey, and vintage McCaffrey is not to be ignored.



John C. Bunnell lives and writes in Portland, Oregon, where the bookstores may actually outnumber the espresso bars.



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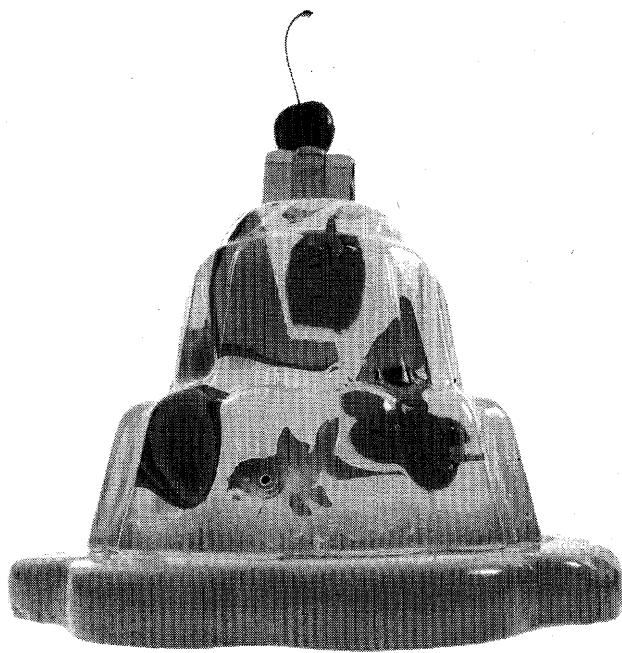


January 1997

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a young mind
is like gelatin.
The idea is to put in
lots of good stuff
before it sets.



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Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines must be observed.

In order to ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be either typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing must include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held
2. Site and location
3. Guests of honor (if applicable)
4. Special events offered
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements, and
6. Address(es) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. Unless stated otherwise, all dollar values given for U.S. and Canadian conventions are in U.S. currency.

WARNING: We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Our wide circulation ensures that over a quarter of a million readers worldwide see each issue. Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the first Monday of each month, four months prior to the on sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the first Monday of September. Announcements for North American and Pacific conventions must be mailed to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, 201 Sheridan Springs Rd., Lake Geneva, WI 53147, U.S.A. Announcements for Europe must be posted an additional month before the deadline to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Limited, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at TSR, Inc., (414) 248-3625 (U.S.A.). Questions or changes concerning European conventions should be directed to TSR Limited, (0223) 212517 (U.K.).



December Conventions

Albuquerque Game Fair December 6-8 NM

Pinnacle Four Seasons Hotel, Albuquerque. Guests: Margaret Weis, Tracy Hickman, and artist Quinton Hoover. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: RPGA® tournament, art show, dealers area, computer room. Registration: varies. AGF '96, 3422 Central Ave SE, Albuquerque, NM 87106 or e-mail WWWOC@USA.NET.

Lagacon 21 December 7 PA

Eagles Hall, Lebanon. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: AD&D® tournaments, dealer area. Registration: varies. LAGA, 1006 Colebrook Rd., Lebanon, PA 17042.

Dominicon December 13-15

St. Patrick's College Maynooth Co., Kildare. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: CCC tournaments and more. Registration: £3/day, £5/weekend. Karl Monaghan, 27 Great Oaks, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, Rep. of Ireland.

January Conventions

Sunquest '97 January 2-5 FL

Marriot Orlando Resort, Orlando. Guests: Timothy Bradstreet, Michael Stackpole, and Jay Tummelson. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: Art show, charity auction, M:tG® tournament, and RPGA events. Registration: \$20/pre-reg. before December 1, \$25/on site. Sunquest, P.O. Box 677069, Orlando, FL 32867-7069. e-mail: sunquest@sundial.net. Website: <http://www.net/~sunquest>.

Crusades '97 January 10-12 CT

Ramada Inn, Norwalk. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Registration: varies. Phillip Spera, 2 Sibley Lane, East Haven, CT 06512; e-mail Phillip_Spera@usa.racal.com.

Pandemonium XIV January 18-19

Ryerson Polytechnical University, Ryerson Hub Cafeteria Toronto, Ontario. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$25/pre-reg. before Jan 5, \$30/on site. Contact Peter Fund, 118 Roncesvalles Avenue #34 Toronto, Ontario M6R 2K8, Canada.

Glorantha Con IV

January 24-26 IL

Ramada Hotel O'Hare, Rosemont. Events: *Call of Cthulhu**, *Runequest**, *Pendragon**, *Mythos** and other related games. Guests: Greg Stafford, Sandy Peterson, and others. Other activities: auction, art show, troll ball, and LARP. Registration: \$40. Andrew Joelson, 1330-D Gifford Ct., Hanover Park, IL 60103-5227. e-mail joelsona@cpdmfg.cig.mot.com.

The 8th Annual Florida Extravaganza

January 25-26 FL

Orlando Expo Center. Events: role-playing, card, board, miniatures games and collectible memorabilia. Other activities: *M:tG* and *Star Wars** tournaments. Registration: varies. e-mail bzalkin@aol.com.

February Conventions

Constitution V

February 14-16 VA

Quality Hotel, Arlington. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: LARP, RPGA, *LIVING CITY*™, *M:tG*, Clay-o-Rama, and an auction. Registration: varies. Constitution V, 2205 Luzerne Ave., Silver Spring, MD. e-mail CONSTI_5@AOL.com.

- Australian convention
- Canadian convention
- European convention

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Important:

DRAGON® Magazine does not publish phone numbers for conventions. Be certain that any address you send us is complete and correct.

To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that it was received. You also might send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please do not send convention notices by fax, as this method has not proven reliable.

Total Confusion XI

February 20-23 MA

Rolling Green Inn, Andover. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: RPGA, LARP, and more. Registration: \$30/pre-reg., \$40/on site. Total Confusion, P.O. Box 403 N. Chelmsford, MA 01863- 0403.

Jaxcon '97

February 21-23 FL

Ramada Inn on Arlington Expressway, Jacksonville. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: AD&D tournament, *M:tG* tournament, dealers room, painting contest, and a flea market. Registration: \$20/pre-reg. before January 1, \$25/on site. Jaxcon, P.O. Box 14218, Jacksonville, FL 32238-4218, e-mail Jaxcon@aol.com.

March Conventions

Prezcon

March 6-9 VA

Best Western Mount Vernon Hotel, Charlottesville. Events: card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: *Battletech** and *Star Wars* miniatures. Registration: \$25/pre-reg., plus a free t-shirt. Justin Thompson, P.O. Box 4661, Charlottesville, VA 22905.

Coscon '97

March 7-9 PA

Days Inn Conference Center, Butler. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: *LIVING CITY* and benefit tournaments, dealers area, demos, computer room, and movies. Registration: \$15/pre-reg. before Feb 25, \$20/on site. For more info send an SASE to: Circle of Swords, P.O. Box 2126, Butler, PA 16003.

Katsucon Three

March 7-9 VA

Holiday Inn Executive Center, Virginia Beach.

Events: Japanese *anime* and *manga*. Guests: Steve Bennet and Robert DeJesus. Other activities: panels, workshops, exhibitor's room, variety and art shows, and a dance. Registration: \$30/pre-reg. before Feb 14, \$40/on site. Katsu Productions, P.O. Box 11582, Blacksburg, VA 24062-1582. e-mail katsucon@vtserf.cc.vt.edu.

Aggiecon XXVIII

March 20-23 TX

University of Texas A&M campus, College Station. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: dealer's room. Registration: varies. Aggiecon XXVIII c/o MSC Cepheid Variable Memorial Student Center, Box J-1 Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77844. Web site <http://cepheid.tamu.edu/aggiecon/aggiecon.html>.

Midsouthcon 16

March 21-23 MS

Sam's Town Hotel & Gambling Hall, Tunica.

Guests: John DeChancie, Mitchell Bently, Cullen Johnson, and Paul Darrow. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: art show, charity auction, dealers room, masquerade, and more. Registration: \$25/pre-reg. before Mar. 1, \$30/on site. Midsouth Science and Fiction Conventions, Inc., P.O. Box 11446, Memphis, TN 38111. Web site <http://www.watervalley.net/midsouthcon>.

East Coast Hobby Show

March 22-24 PA

FT. Washington Expo Center, Philadelphia. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: a dealers room. Registration: varies. Web site <http://www.hobbyshow.com>, e-mail hobbyshow@aol.com.

Egyptian Campaign '97

March 28-30 IL

Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. Events: role-playing, card, board, and mini-

tures games. Other activities: RPGA events, *M:tG*, a used game auction, and two miniatures contests. Registration: \$10/pre-reg., \$12/on site. Egyptian Campaign 97, c/o S.I.U.C. Strategic Games Society, Office of Student Development, 3rd Floor Student Center, Carbondale, IL 62901-4425. Send e-mail to ECGAMCon@aol.com, web site <http://www.siu.edu/departments.rso/gamesoc>.

Hotlead

March 29-30

* Victorian Inn, Stratford, Ontario. Guest: Don Perrin. Events: fantasy, science fiction, and historical miniatures games. Other activities: a miniatures painting competition. Registration: varies. James Manto 431 Greenwood Drive, Stratford, Ontario N5A-7S7, Canada.

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Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

Title of Publication: DRAGON® Magazine

Editor:
Dave Gross
201 Sheridan Springs Road, Lake Geneva, WI 53147

Date of Filing: 14 October 1996

Managing Editor:
Pierce B. Watters
201 Sheridan Springs Road, Lake Geneva, WI 53147

Publication No.: 0279-6848

Owner
TSR, Inc.

No. of Issues Published Annually: 13

201 Sheridan Springs Road, Lake Geneva, WI 53147
Lorraine D. Williams
201 Sheridan Springs Road, Lake Geneva, WI 53147
Willard Martens
201 Sheridan Springs Road, Lake Geneva, WI 53147

Annual Subscription Price: \$42.00

Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other
Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent of Total
Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities:
None

Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of
Publication:
DRAGON® Magazine 201 Sheridan Springs Road, Lake
Geneva, WI 15147

Publisher:
TSR, Inc. 201 Sheridan Springs Road, Lake Geneva,
WI 53147

Extent and Nature of Circulation
Total No. Copies (Net Press Run)
Paid and/or Requested Circulation Sales
Through Dealers and Carriers
Mail Subscription
Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation
Free Distribution by Mail, Carrier, or Other Means
Free Distribution Outside the Mail
Total Distribution
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Unaccounted, Spoiled
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59,417
94
83
59,594
777
810
61,181

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CHILDREN OF the NIGHT

Vampires of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting

by Paul Culotta

illustrated by David Day

Although one usually associates vampires and other undead with the RAVENLOFT® setting, they roam almost every fantasy world. Here are four unusual vampires from Faerûn in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign, presented in the manner of the recent *Children of the Night* series of RAVENLOFT supplements. With minor changes, the DM can place these terrible creatures in other campaign settings.

Morg

Chaotic Evil hill giant
vampire shaman

Appearance

Morg is tall for a hill giant (18') and quite muscular. If not for his smelly bearskin furs, vacant gray eyes, and 6"-long fangs, some humans and demihumans might consider him handsome. Several mummified heads of former victims are tied loosely by their hair to his broad leather belt. On a rope around his neck hangs a holy symbol of the hill giant deity, Grolantor.

Armor Class 1	Str 20
Movement 12, Fly 18	Dex 15
Hit Dice 12 +2	Con 17
Hit Points 77	Int 11
THAC0 9	Wis 14
No. of Attacks 1	Ch 16
Morale 18	

Magic Resistance: Immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold* spells, paralysis, or poisons.

Damage/Attack: 5-10 (+8) touch or bite; 2-12 (+8 for Strength) spiked club

Special Attacks: *Energy drain*, *charm*;

throw rocks for 2-16 hp damage or *heads of paralyzation* (see below); *shapechanges* into giant owl and cave bear forms; spells.

Special Defenses: Regeneration when shapechanging, +1 or better weapon to hit, cold attacks or electrical attacks cause only half damage

Spells: 5, 3, 2

Spheres Available: All, Animal, Charm, Combat, Elemental (earth), Healing (reversible), Necromantic, Summoning, Sun (reversible), War, Weather.

Background

Morg's mannerisms and appearance led to exile from his tribe. Not only was he uncommonly tall, he was repulsive and annoying to other hill giants (to them his Charisma is only 8). His teeth were not crooked, his hair fell neatly in place, and he didn't have one pimple, mole, or wart on his entire body. Even worse, he did not slobber while eating, he always spoke clearly, and he never picked his nose. If the hill giants had ever displayed a freak show, Morg would have been the star attraction. Thus, when Morg became an adolescent, his tribe drove him away.

For several years, Morg wandered through Kryptgarden forest and eventually served as a mercenary to the fierce Lostafinga hobgoblins that claim the area. Eventually the goblins decided to take over the abandoned dwarven lair known as Southkrypt Garden that lies north of the forest, and they took Morg with them. When they were turned back with heavy losses by the Garden's ruth-

less denizens, the badly wounded Morg was left for dead.

As monsters closed in on him, Morg uttered a desperate prayer to his evil deity, Grolantor, and he asked for the strength to survive the battle. He promised to dedicate his life to Grolantor in exchange for a reprieve from certain death. Something dark and foul took interest in the hill giants' plight, and a cloud of blackness descended on Morg and his opponents.

When it lifted, Morg discovered that he had no further wounds and that the creatures in the dwarven stronghold served him. He also learned (quickly and painfully) that he could no longer abide sunlight; he had become a vampire. Somehow, a symbol of Grolantor was around his neck, and he was able to receive spells. Morg believed that it was his god who saved him, not knowing that it was really a far darker power that had come to his aid.

Soon, Morg put his newly found abilities to good use. The first ones to feel his revenge were the hill giants who had exiled him. One died each night, and it was not until half of them were dead that the rest moved far away. The three who had argued the loudest for Morg's exile were not among those who escaped; they presently serve as vampire slaves to Morg.

The next victims were the Lostafinga hobgoblins who had deserted him. Fortunately for the goblins, their shaman realized quickly (with a lot of help from his deity) what was ravaging their tribe. The shaman found Morg and bargained

with him, promising hobgoblin guards to watch over his lair and captives to feed his enormous appetite for fresh blood. Morg agreed, with the stern promise that should the hobgoblins fail him, he would finish what he had begun.

Thus matters stand to this day. The hobgoblins capture animals and sentient victims to feed to the vampire shaman and his slaves. They also sow false treasure maps and rumors whenever they get the chance, in the hope of luring greedy adventurers to Southkrypt Garden. As for the vampires, they are content with staying in the lair and feeding off that which is brought to them, although once or twice a month they emerge to hunt for themselves.

Personality

Morg is cruel and evil, and he delights in draining his victims and throwing their bodies aside for the denizens of Southkrypt Garden to eat. He is intent on making good on his promise to serve Grolantor, and he sincerely believes that he is doing so by causing as much death and destruction as possible.

An uncomfortable fact of his existence, however, is that it is a day-to-day affair. Morg needs lots of blood (minimum of one human or a large deer) each day, and there is the added pressure to feed his slaves (although they need far less; one human could last the three of them each day). Animal blood will suffice, if there is a lot of it, but preying on animals will soon make the whole area desolate. Thus, Morg constantly challenges the hobgoblins to be more inventive in luring people to the remote area. Fortunately, there are already many rumors about the hidden dwarven wealth of Southkrypt Garden.

Domain

Morg roams his lands in Southkrypt Garden and hunts there and in the the Sword Mountains.

Combat

Morg may be encountered outside at night on the one or two evenings per month that he hunts. On these occasions, he typically shapechanges into a monstrously large owl form (14' high, 30' wingspan, MV 18(E), Dmg 2-8/2-8/2-5, each with +8 damage bonus) and ranges over the countryside looking for encampments of miners, adventurers, or merchants. When he finds one, he swoops down quietly,



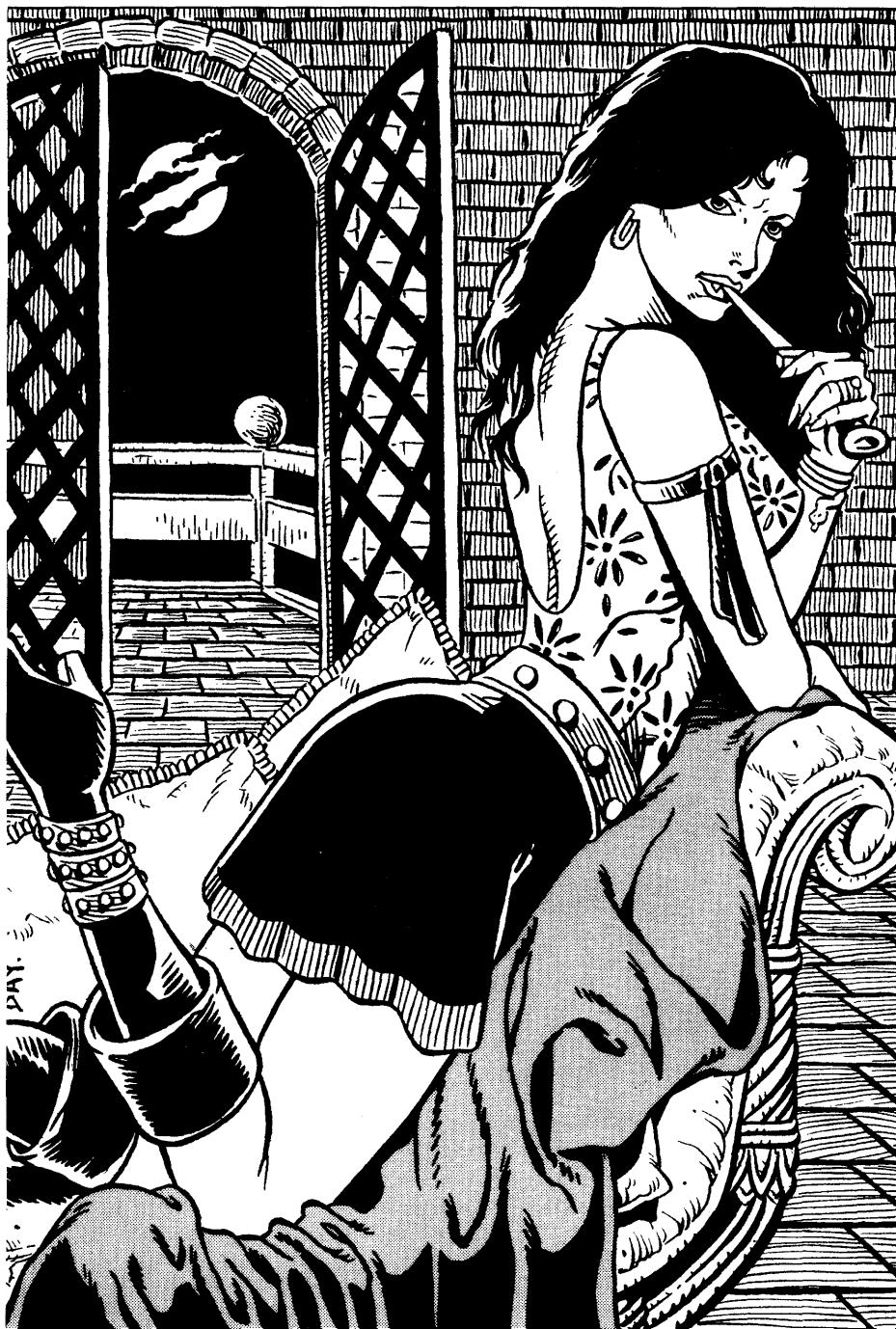
snatches a victim (up to human size), and flies back to his lair to feast. Those caught in his talons have but one chance to escape with a successful Bend Bars roll. Notably, Morg flies away slowly in the hope that the victim's companions will follow to rescue their companion.

The other way of encountering Morg is in his lair, although only the hardest of adventurers can ever find him. Those who wander into Southkrypt Garden fail to realize that they are walking into a hideous trap. The entrance to this underground place is well guarded by Lostafinga hobgoblins. Their job is not to keep intruders out but to ensure that

they stay in after they enter. Once adventurers go into the place, the hobgoblins come out of hiding and block the way. Then they send some of their fellows off to get reinforcements to ensure that they can keep them in.

Inside the lair, several underground levels host xaren, vilstrak, vargouilles, storopers, and other creatures along with several unsprung traps put in by the dwarves who lived here long ago. All of these monsters serve Morg and attack not to kill but to wear intruders down and take prisoners.

The lowest level of Southkrypt Garden is where Morg and his three



vampire slaves stay. Although they are sensitive to sunlight, they are not inactive as long as they remain on this deep level. Morg is cunning, and if adventurers ever manage to get this far, he assumes his giant cave bear form and tries to play the part of a scared but friendly bear that tags along with the adventurers. Of course, once they get into a desperate fight, the "bear" turns on them (Dmg 1-8/1-8/1-12, each with +8 damage bonus, SA Hug for 2-16 +8 if either paw hit is 18 or better).

Morg cannot assume gaseous form nor does he regenerate as do most vampires. When shapechanging from one of

his animal forms to hill giant, he regains 10-60% of all lost hit points. In his natural form, he prefers to throw missiles or cast spells (*prayer, hold person, and faerie fire* are his favorites) and let his slaves do the fighting.

Like most hill giants, Morg can throw boulders, but instead he throws the mummified *heads of paralyzation* that he keeps at his belt. These come from prior victims and they have been specially preserved and enchanted through a dark process revealed to Morg by Grolantor (or so Morg thinks). When thrown, they whiz through the air with an unearthly moan, causing all who

hear them to save vs. paralyzation or flee in fear. Upon striking a target, they break apart with a sickening plop. Those hit suffer 1d4+9 hp damage and must save vs. paralyzation or become paralyzed for 1d12 rounds (usually more than enough time for Morg or one of his minions to bind the unfortunate victim with rope).

It is only when engaged in melee that Morg fights with his big spiked club, but if he hasn't fed yet, he tosses the club aside, grabs his victim, and drains him rapidly (25% of hp or 10 hp per round, whichever is less).

Those who are captured by Morg generally meet their end in a day or two, as they are drained by the vampires, and their lifeless bodies are tossed to the dungeon denizens for feeding. Thus far, none who have wandered into the Southkrypt Garden have ever returned to tell the tale.

Saestra Karanok "The Lady of the Night" Chaotic Evil vampire thief

Appearance

Standing at 5'9" tall, Saestra Karanok is a sultry brunette whose light violet eyes sparkle with glee whenever she is happy — or whenever she is about to feed on the living. She appears to be in her mid-20s.

As the daughter of the ruler of Luthcheq, she dresses in impeccably tailored color coordinated dresses and gowns which are usually black or purple and liberally decorated with gems, lace, and ribbons. She wears an ornamental dagger at her side.

Armor Class	1	Str	18/76
Movement	12/ Fly 18	Dex	17
Hit Dice	8+3	Con	11
Hit Points	38	Int	15
THAC0	11	Wis	12
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	16
Morale	16		

Magic Resistance: Immune to *sleep, charm, hold* spells, paralysis, or poisons.

Damage/Attack: 5-10 touch or bite; 1d4 (+4 for Strength) dagger

Special Attacks: *Energy drain, charm, backstab* (x3 damage)

Special Defenses: Regeneration, +1 or better weapon to hit, cold and electrical attacks cause only half damage.

Thief Abilities: PP 70%, OL 62%, FRT 60%, MS 95%, HS 59%, HN 55%, CW 98%, RL 95%

Location: City of Luthcheq, Chessenta.

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Background

Saestra is a member of the mad Karanok clan, a family obsessed with destroying all mages in the Realms. The Karanoks, who rule the city of Luthcheq, go to great lengths to capture wizards and burn them at stakes fueled by witchweed, a volatile oily bush that is grown locally. The eldest Karanok, Maelos (CE P18), is an elderly figurehead leader, while Saestra's father, Jaerlos (CE P13) wields the real power. All of the Karanoks worship a strange deity named Entropy.

Another notable family member is Naeros "the Marker" (CE F12), Saestra's cruel older brother. He was responsible for his sister becoming undead. As a practical joke, Naeros locked her in a crypt for several days, but he did not know that it was the lair of a vampire. The creature took a liking to the attractive Saestra and made her his servant.

Saestra recognized the advantages of her new existence but soon chafed under her master's yoke. Moreover, she feared that her crazed family would destroy her once they discovered what she had become. She left the crypt and sowed rumors that an undead wizard

lurked in the crypt. Shortly thereafter, the Karanoks found her master, staked him, and burned his remains at a day-break in a witchweed fire.

Though she has been undead for a few years now, Saestra has kept her vampiric nature secret by "volunteering" to stay up all night to manage the watch and to "sleep" during the day. She explained that with her supervision, the watch might become more efficient in tracking down wizards and that the whole family could rest easier knowing that she was on duty. Further, this gave her the opportunity to make her weekly rounds among the children of the poor where she could allay their fears about sorcerers skulking in the evening shadows.

In her family's eyes, Saestra has been tremendously efficient in finding and killing wizards who come to town. Just before each dawn, Saestra shows them the body of a wizard she and the watch have found, along with magical items and spell books in the mage's possession. The body is burned after Saestra goes to sleep.

Of course, the vast majority of these people are not wizards, but ordinary

people. The mad Karanoks are so obsessed with their quest that they do not realize that Saestra has drained the wizards. All they see is the knife wound in the back (cleverly left by Saestra). The Karnoks also fail to realize that the magical items and books are stolen back by Saestra at night and that she uses them again and again in the same scheme.

These are items that Saestra has collected from a few real wizards. They include four different spellbooks (each with 5d6 spells), a *ring of the ram*, a *wand of fire* (40 charges), a *figurine of wondrous power* (bison), a *folding bout*, six scrolls (each with 1d6 spells), a *ring of water-walking*, and a dagger +1. Of course, Saestra uses none of this stuff herself, but plants it as evidence on victims for the watch to find and bring to her.

She carries a nonmagical dagger that is covered with a paralytic poison she brews from carrion crawler fluids. A victim struck by this dagger must save vs. poison or be paralyzed. It can be used three times before the poison loses effect.

Personality

Saestra has two totally different mental outlooks. The first (which manifests

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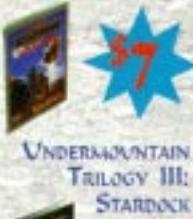
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itself in the early evening) is that of a compassionate, caring, sweet innocent. It was this personality that she had prior to becoming undead. Just as she did before, Saestra goes into the city one night a week and delivers baskets of food, healing herbs, and small toys for the children of Luthcheq. It is this habit of charity that has earned her the title "Lady of the Night" by the people of Luthcheq, who murmur this title with respect and admiration, not out of fear.

One hour after midnight (the hour that she was made a vampiress), Saestra assumes the personality of a blood-thirsty, ravening monster. She makes her way to the palace, grabs some magical items from her secret stash, and plants them in a victim's room somewhere in the city. She then tells the watch that she has received an anonymous tip and to apprehend "the wizard." When they bring the unfortunate prisoner in, Saestra "interrogates" him in private. The interview concludes with her stabbing the victim in the back. When it is all over, she has the body displayed for the family's viewing. Alert watch members have noticed that she always seems a bit flushed after these sessions, but they say nothing and attribute her appearance to the general zealotry of all Karanoks.

Sooner or later Saestra must realize that her vampiric state does not age her, and she will likely do something to avoid suspicion before her family notices her undead state. Most likely, her grandfather, father, and brother will all die under mysterious circumstances, or perhaps they themselves will be accused of practicing magic. Most certainly she will enjoy the sight of her beloved brother, the one who locked her in the crypt, screaming in agony as the witchweed fire laps at his feet around the burning stake.

Combat: Confronting Saestra should not be an easy task. Like most vampires, she can summon bats or wolves (See MM/355) to her aid. Not only can she slip away using her Hide in Shadows and Move Silently abilities but also she can *shapechange* to fly or run away, or she can turn into gaseous form.

Her coffin is cleverly hidden in a secret compartment in her room, and during the day she is well guarded. Not only are her relatives nearby, but the family compound is a veritable garrison bristling with armed guards and priests who would love to burn intruders (especially wizards) at a witchweed fire. Another secret compartment in her room hides all the magical items she has accumulated

in her years of wizard-hunting.

If forced into melee, Saestra fights with her dagger, trying to paralyze her attackers and save them for a later snack. If she can maneuver so as to perform a backstab, she will do so. If confronted when she is in her bloodthirsty state, she attacks with a frenzy (+1 bonus to her THAC0).

Saed, Beast Chieftain of Veldorn

Lawful Evil vampire psionicist

Appearance

Saed appears to be a tall, heavily built human in his late 40s. His hair is black and wavy, and his eyes are the deepest blue. His skin is ebony-hued like that of most Durparians, and his lips are an odd liver color. He wears indigo-dyed pants and shirt, along with a dark gray cloak and boots. A heavy gold chain with numerous charms hangs about his neck and a large gold ring with a black onyx stone is on his right middle finger.

Armor Class	-1	Str	18/76
Movement	12, Fly 18	Dex	16
Hit Dice	8+3	Con	9
Hit Points	55	Int	16
THAC0	13	Wis	16
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	18
Morale	16		

Damage/Attack: 5-10

Special Attacks: *Energy drain, charm, psionics*

Special Defenses: Regeneration, +1 or better weapon to hit, cold and electrical attacks cause only half damage.

Magic Resistance: Immune to sleep, charm, *hold* spells, paralysis, or poisons.

Psionic Disciplines: Clairsentient, Psychokinetic, Psychoportive, Telepathic

Sciences: (6) Clairaudience, clairvoyance, detonate, project force, mindlink, teleport.

Devotions: (17) Awe, conceal thoughts, contact, ESP, identity penetration, life detection, truthear, teleport trigger, dimensional door, all-round vision, danger sense, combat mind, animate object, control flames, create sound, levitation, molecular agitation.

Defense modes: mind blank, thought shield, mental barrier, tower of iron will, intellect fortress.

PSPs: 144

Background

Over three hundred years ago, Saed was the ruling *nawab* of the city of Turelve, in Durpar. By Durparian custom,

the nawab was the wealthiest merchant of the city. With such influence (and his tremendous psionic powers), Saed was able to manipulate caravans and other traders into hiring his escort service and renting his warehouses and thus remain in power. Saed did not want to pass on his wealth to others in his family, or chukka; in his opinion, they were beneath his intellect and therefore unworthy.

Said put out discreet inquiries for *potions of longevity* to keep himself young and in power forever. A response came one dark night from a mysterious stranger from the north who promised him something better: immortality. All Saed had to do was follow the stranger to an abandoned shrine of the goddess Shar and swear loyalty on her altar. The stranger was a friendly, open fellow, and Saed trusted him, not realizing that he had fallen prey to vampiric charm.

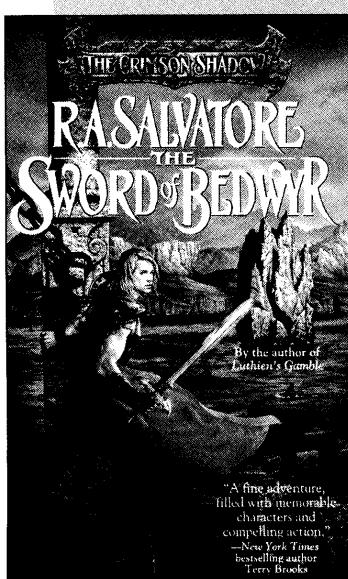
Saed followed his new "friend" to the desolate place in an old city under a large hill, and he swore loyalty to Shar. The ruler of Turelve gained immortality, but he became a slave in the process.

Soon, Saed's family, Chakka Baroda, and the rest of the city became suspicious of the unusual hours that Saed was keeping, and business began to drop off. Chakka Baroda investigated and soon found out that Saed was nothing more than a puppet whose strings were pulled by a hideous vampire. At considerable expense, they had this monstrosity tracked down and destroyed by a group of adventurers, but Saed escaped. The chakka put out a story about his disappearance, and a successor was chosen from the family. Chakka Baroda still rules Turelve to this day.

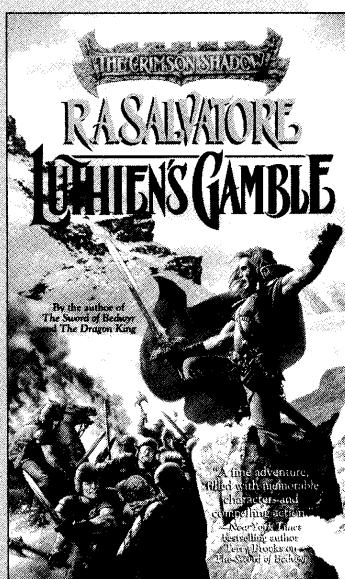
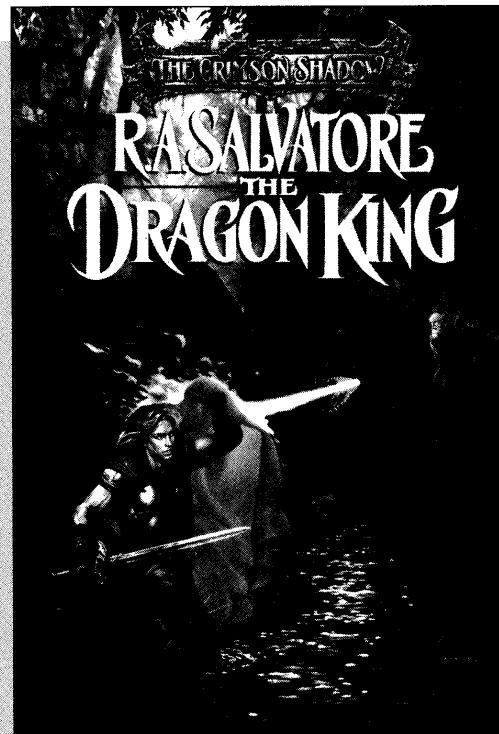
Saed had fled to the west with a *charmed* bodyguard who guarded his coffin. Eventually, he settled in Vaelen, the ancient underground city where he had become a vampire. Due to his negotiating skills, the other monster rulers (known as beast-chieftains) of Veldorn came to respect Saed's abilities to reach consensus and arbitrate disputes. This ability not only stems from his days as a tough bargaining merchant but is equally due to Saed's developed psionic abilities. Since taking on this role, there have been no serious outbreaks among the beast-chieftains, and Saed has persuaded them to act together in case any one of them is threatened from the outside forces of good. Indeed this has paid off handsomely: all invasions into Veldorn have been humiliated by a stiff, coordinated defense of the beast-chieftains.

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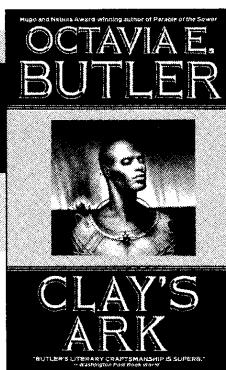


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Personality: Saed is a melancholy figure who broods over his lost fortune and power. He chastises himself daily on how foolish he was to fall for the bad bargain with his original vampire master. Every month or so, he loses his temper and ventures forth to steal something of value from a leading merchant of the Shining South area of the Realms. He believes that it will make him feel better, but when he accomplishes such deeds, he looks about his decaying city, populated with undead, and takes no comfort in the theft.

The only good diversion for Saed is arbitrating disagreements among the other beast chieftains. This is a dicey affair, because the other monster lords of Veldorn (beholders, yuan-ti, wererats, lizardmen, and others) require a good facilitator and diplomat to keep them from tearing each other apart. In these negotiations, Saed uses his telepathic abilities to good advantage, finding out the hidden agendas of the disputants and the middle ground where compromises can be reached. This has earned him the respect of the beast-chieftains, except for

the beholders who don't trust him (or anyone else, for that matter).

Domain

Saed rules, in a sense, over Veldorn, the Kingdom of Monsters.

Combat

Hunting Saed is dangerous at best. Not only is his city full of undead (ghouls, shadows, wights, and a few vampire slaves), but every so often Saed uses his life detection and danger sense disciplines to ensure that nothing is around to harm him. Inside Vaelen is an unholy shrine to Shar that causes a -2 penalty to all turning attempts. Dousing the shrine with at least five vials of holy water can destroy it.

Once alerted to intruders, Saed uses the most appropriate psionic abilities to locate and engage his enemies. A favorite trick of his is to levitate high above his enemies and punish them with project force, detonate, and molecular agitation while his undead servants close in for the kill. Even if someone comes close with a stake and mallet, his *teleport* trigger whisks him safely away.

Worse yet, Saed's enemies can not flee into the "safety of the daylight." If he does not feel up to fighting intruders, Saed can *teleport* to a neighboring beast-chieftain domain, suggest that the PCs are invading all of Vaelen, and let his neighbor go after them. If he feels like a challenge, Saed goes out himself and gives chase. He wears a *ring of vampiric protection*, which covers him with an invisible screen that negates any light-based spell cast at him. Thus, Saed may travel in broad daylight with no ill effects. Of course, *dispel magic* successfully cast (vs. 12th level) on this item could have catastrophic effects on Saed. The ring radiates magic and evil, and any non-evil being who touches it must save vs death magic or lose 4-48 hp each time it is touched.



Paul Culotta often contributes to DRAGON® Magazine and DUNGEON® Adventures, and he has written the recently released RAVENLOFT accessory Children of the Night: Vampires.

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I am writing in response to Ian Bloomsburg's letter in issue #234 in which he had many comments about the thickness of spell books in 2nd Edition. He mentioned, in a sarcastic manner, that the pages must have been made of wood to be that thick. He is actually not far off. If you look at how thick modern paper is, and then compare it to the papers of the Middle Ages, you will see a distinct difference in thickness. Modern paper has been made from many things that allow it to be thin and strong. Paper in the Middle Ages was made mainly of cloth and wood pulp, which gave it strength and also made it extremely thick, sometimes upward of eight times as thick as modern paper. To get an idea of how thick the paper was, grab a piece of fairly thick construction paper, not the cheap kindergarten stuff, but the professional grade, maybe 150 lb. stock (which is about six times as thick as resume style paper). So, take a look at a nice thick dictionary, check the number of pages, and divide that by six, maybe eight. You get fairly low numbers. Also, remember that a spellbook would be made of better,

stronger materials. Stronger paper is thicker. Even paper ten times as thick as modern paper, like that used in this very magazine, is still very flexible, and still is thin.

Remember, medieval-period paper-makers didn't have paper mills to compress the paper to a thin sheet. That is unless you want the dwarves and dragons to get together to form a paper thinning corporation, but lets leave that for the April issue.

Amy & Ryan Biggs
via e-mail

Ian Bloomsburg apparently isn't familiar with the history of writing materials. Rocks, wood, skins, woven reeds, metal sheets, paper, and plastic have all been used. Spell books could be made of any reasonable material. (You've got a really mean DM if he uses rock). But, assume familiar paper is used. Even today, paper can be easily bought: from the common thin paper of this *DRAGON Magazine* to the thick cotton-laced parchment for legal papers — 5 to 10 ten times thicker and heavier. With a little searching even thicker parchment is available. In general, the older the paper, the thicker the paper. Books hundreds of years old have pages that are quite thick. Books much older commonly use animal skins. Either fit well with the periods most campaigns emulate. A change in page count isn't needed for spell books, only a little education on the history of paper. A larger library might even have some ancient samples.

Devin Ross
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There's a definite lack of sense in the general opinion about mages today. People seem to think that they are some kind of superhumans. They use four-sided dice for Hit Dice, have the world's worst combat short of a 0-level NPC child or scribe, and are thoroughly exhausted by casting spells to their daily limits. They must spend extravagant amounts of money on material components for spells. If not a genius, they can't understand the more complicated high level spells. Mages are easily distracted. They prefer to outwit their opponents. Why blast away with spells when you can cast *charm* or *sleep*? How could easily killed, easily distracted mages be a major part in combat? I can see wizardly duels, trying to outsmart your

opponent — but besieging a castle? Give me a break.

Magical items aren't a problem; it's DMs who distribute them like candy who are. If they aren't handed out in massive quantities, no problem. Remember how few wizards can make magical items.

As to the commonly held idea that wizards must adventure to gain levels, that is a fallacy. A wizard needs to research five spells per his maximum spell level to gain an experience level. That can and often does make an archmage with a fat book of spells that no one else has.

Wayne Rossi
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Josh Heckman, writing in issue #233, spoke on the subject of level limits for demihumans. I found his commentary on the psychological makeup of demihumans to be interesting. I think that the matter of demihuman level limits should be discussed in terms of limitations imposed by the nature of the demihumans.

I understand that the reason demihumans are limited in level is rooted in the solid earth of game balance. Demihumans gain advantages (when compared to humans) and so must be limited in some fashion (again, when compared to humans) to keep the game in balance. The reason for this is simple: the game was designed to be humanocentric — revolving around the human experience in fantasy.

The balancing mechanisms are thus a given, in game terms. The challenge this creates — ignored by the designers — is one of giving a plausible rationale for the limits. Mr. Heckman cites psychological reasons for the limitation. I would also offer that there could be physiological reasons, also.

Consider the casting of spells, for instance. Elves are assumed to be slightly different in basic magical capabilities than are humans in the game. Elves can be fighter/mages in the game, while humans cannot. This shows a basic difference in the physical abilities of humans and elves. Extend this concept to say that elves and humans interact with magic differently, on a very basic level. Yes, spells can affect them in much the same fashion, but there remains a slight physiological difference in how magic interacts with the two.

At this point it becomes a small matter to conclude that a level limit for elves

using magic is reasonable. Elves interact with magic differently and so cannot and do not use magic as humans do. This provides a rationale for the limitation and also helps in the roleplaying of elves. It also stays within the balancing guidelines of the game.

Gamemasters can also expand on this difference by supplying elves with spells that "fit" their psychology and physiology, spells that humans are unable to use (and vice versa). This will provide more atmosphere **and** a solid mechanism to drive home the rationale used to explain game-imposed limitations.

Now, if staying within the boundaries provided for the play of AD&D is not of much concern to a gaming group, participants can decide that the variant they choose to play is not humanocentric. The universe can focus on elves (or dwarves or furry things or those big wart-covered critters, or whatever) and humans can be mere bystanders.

It is my experience that the players wanting level limits to be abolished are those who are wanting to play demihumans with all of the advantages the rules provide but none of the restrictions. These players do not really want

to play elves, with all that such would entail, but to play that particular set of advantages (and the outstanding characters they can build with them.) Instead of wanting to explore the elf condition (and all that that implies — good and bad), they wish to explore the efficacy of bonuses when using game mechanics.

Larry D. Hols
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I am writing in response to several letters. First to Nick Spear (issue #229) about magic and its influence on the game. Sorry, Roni Saari (issue #234), but I agree with Nick on his view of magic. I do agree with Roni that it does cause some problems, but magic is fun. Moreover, what would happen if there were no way to beat a monster except by magic? What would you do if there were no magic in your group?

I think a mage should be involved in the game, but he shouldn't be a powerful one at all. (We all know what happens when one powerful mage is around.) There should be a challenge in the story somewhere, but magic shouldn't be banished.

As for Robert Armstrong (issue #234) and his idea on the axe, keep up the good work! This idea is a good one, because there are too many specific items around. I am sure that no one has ever used a halberd in his campaign. Why have so many weapons around when at least half of them will not be used? I suggest you write more ideas like this sometime.

Now, to Nathan Kirschenbaum (issue #229) who I agree with totally. Female characters are as important as males in a story line. It is good to have both men and women in a campaign.

I agree with Martin Scutt (issue #234), and I wonder as well why humans cannot be multi-classed at least. Don't humans have as good a chance as learning magic as do elves? I allow multi-classed humans in my campaigns, and so far I don't have a problem with it.

I welcome letters from other readers of "Forum."

Chris Leon

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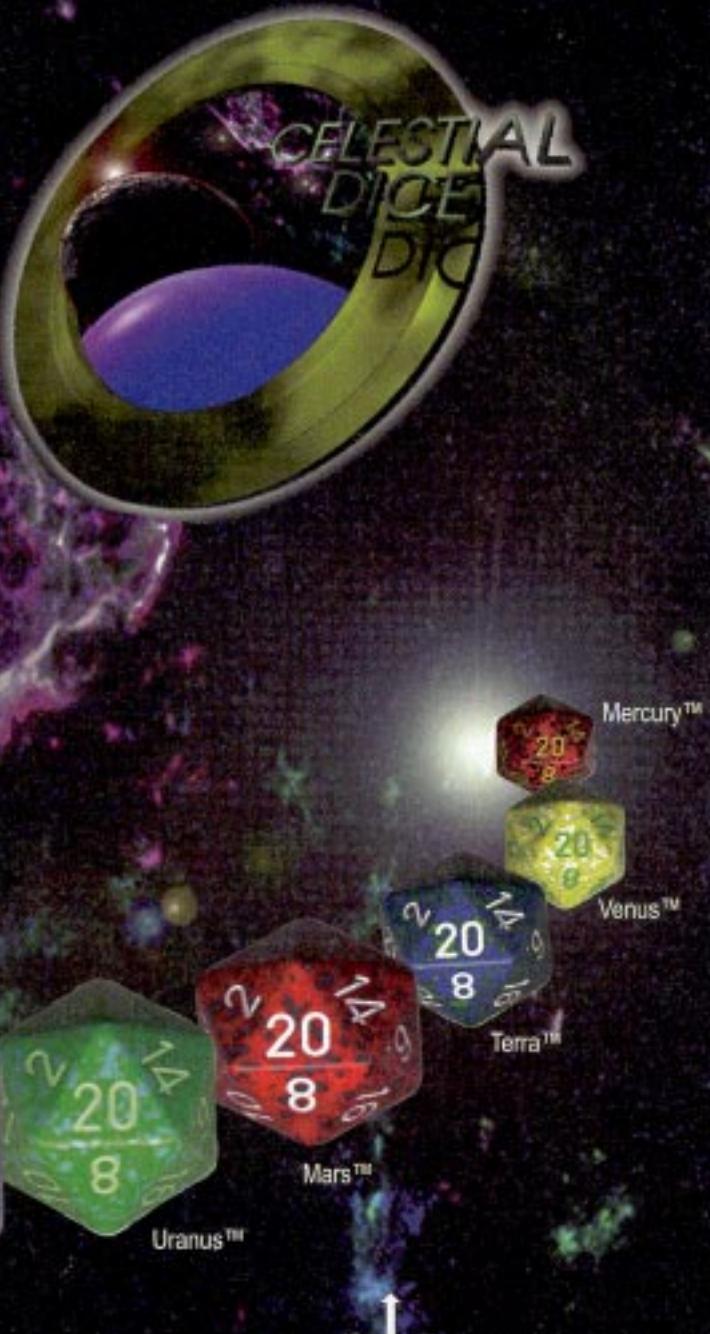
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Sage Advice

by Skip Williams

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This month, "Sage Advice" pays a visit to war-torn Krynn for a study of the new **SAGA™** dramatic adventure game.

In the new **SAGA** game system, does a monster's Physique score fall to a lower number or stay the same when it suffers a wound? I think it should fall, because a monster couldn't fight as well with an arrow in its shoulder.

A creature or character's Physique score doesn't decrease with wounds any more than a hero's does. True, a hero loses cards, and therefore combat ability (indirectly), with every wound, but a creature or character doesn't have any cards at all.

If you want to give heroes a better chance to defeat monsters with very high Physique scores, make a random draw every time the monster suffers a wound. If the card drawn is from the suit of Dragons, the monster meets with a wounding mishap and suffers a -1 penalty to all ability scores for the duration of the combat scene. If the creature has one mishap and later suffers another, the effects accumulate. That is, a monster has a -2 to all ability scores after suffering two mishaps, a -3 after suffering three mishaps, and so on.

Does anyone in the DRAGONLANCE®: FIFTH AGE™ setting have the ability to turn undead, or was this priestly ability lost when the gods departed? Does anyone on Krynn have power over the undead at all?

Undead turning is a granted priest ability; no one on Krynn currently has the ability because the gods aren't around to

grant it anymore. On the other hand, one can "turn" incorporeal undead with a spiritualism spell. Necromancy can "turn" corporal undead. Mentalism spells can affect any creature with a mind, which includes most creatures from the undead table (Book One, page 128) except skeletons and zombies. Mentalism, too, can duplicate a turning effect.

It's clear from the rules that the various elemental schools of sorcery can create bits and pieces of their elements. For example, a hero can create a stone wall with a geomancy spell. Can a hero or character also use an elemental spell to destroy an element or protect against that element? If not, is it at all possible to duplicate AD&D® game spells such as protection from fire with the **SAGA rules?**

Most elemental spells can create, reshape, remove, or protect against their elements. One can, for example, duplicate such AD&D game spells as *lower water*, *create water*, and *part water* with hydromancy spells. One also could create a hydromancy spell that keeps things from getting wet. One could not, however, turn water to dust without a transmutation spell and knowledge of geomancy and hydromancy.

The tricky part of protection/destruction spells is determining difficulty. A spell that protects from fire is fairly easy; just determine how many points of fire damage the spell blocks out and assign a value from the Numeric Adjustments table (Va). A geomancy spell that eliminates rock, however, could be tricky. A small rock lying on the ground is easy to blow away, but if that rock is the keystone for a huge bridge, you must increase the area of effect to account for the whole bridge (no using wimpy 5-point spells to make whole structures fall).

Is it just me, or is there absolutely no way to kill (or be killed by) a foe outright? I've combed the rules and it looks like everybody and everything goes unconscious before dying — you then have to smack the body around or else you didn't actually kill the foe. There's no way to simulate the very scene

quoted at the beginning of the combat chapter (Book One, page 56), in which Tanis just lops a draconian's head clean off in combat. Instead he'd have knocked the thing unconscious and then kill it.

Oops. The game does have an instant-kill rule, but it got lost somewhere during the production process. Here's the dropped text:

Heroes and other major characters are seldom killed instantly. At the very least, the dying character sticks around long enough to gasp out a few last words, utter a dying curse, or profess his inner-most secret love.

Of course, there are times when this isn't how the world works. If Malystrix or one of her ilk lets loose with a torrent of flame on a single individual, the odds are that the target will be incinerated instantly. No goodbyes, no lingering death scenes, just a few ashes and maybe some smoke.

*If the number of damage points left over from an attack which knocks out a hero or character [note that all monsters are "characters" in **SAGA** parlance] is greater than his Endurance score, the victim has been slain instantly.*

Consider the following example. Ren has been badly beaten and has but a single card (the five of swords) left in his hand. He staggers boldly on but finds himself confronted by a blue dragon who unleashes a stroke of lightning at him. Despite his armor and other protections, Ren suffers 12 points of damage. Ren's player gives up his card, absorbing 5 points of damage but leaving 8 unaccounted for. If Ren's Endurance is equal to or greater than this "overkill," he's simply knocked out. If it's not, he's instantly slain.

As it is, his Endurance is a 7, so we won't be seeing Ren in any more of our examples.

It's very important to use this rule, as it puts some fear into heroes' lives — they really can be killed if they let themselves get caught in fights they can't handle. It can relieve the Narrator of the difficult task of deciding when characters administer the *coup de grace* to heroes. The rule also grants heroes the occasional satisfaction of obliterating the villains without having to wrestle with their consciences.

The rules in Chapter 5 say that the basic spell-point cost for a spell does not include any adjustments for resistance and says the caster should direct more spell points toward the casting than the spell's actual required total number of points to allow for resistance (page 80).

So, does the caster have any way of knowing how much resistance his spell faces? What happens when the spell caster doesn't allocate enough points to cover the increased cost? What happens when the caster allocates more points than are actually necessary to cover the spell's increased cost?

A hero or character casting a resisted spell has no special ability to judge the level of resistance except by experience or by using a divination spell to evaluate the resistance (though such a spell would face resistance itself). When a hero casts a resisted spell, the player must make his best guess about how many extra spell points to spend — the player may not look in the rules to check a creature's Intellect or Essence scores.

When a character casts a resisted spell, the Narrator should consider the needs of the story. It would never do to let a scene go bust because a villain's spell fizzled without so much as a card play from the heroes. When in doubt, make a Reason action using the character's Intellect score and a random draw. If the action succeeds, then the caster spends slightly more spell points than necessary, say the difference between the action difficulty and the action score. If the action fails, the character spends a lot more points than necessary, say the base cost plus the action-score total. If the random draw is a Dragon card and the action fails, the character spends too few points, say the base cost minus the card's face value. The Narrator can set the difficulty for the character's Reason action by how much experience the caster has with the spell's target as follows:

Familiarity	Action Difficulty
Very Familiar	Easy (4)
Somewhat Familiar	Average (8)
Unfamiliar	Challenging (12)
Completely Unknown	Daunting (16)

Note that heroes cannot use this table. I offer it strictly as a means for Narrators to resolve character spells fairly. Note also that after tossing a few spells at a particular target, a character probably will become somewhat familiar with the target simply by observing the effects of his spells.

In any case, when a caster fails to allocate enough points to a spell, the spell automatically fails, and all points the caster did allocate are lost. If a caster spends more points than necessary, the extra points are simply lost, though the spell works normally in all other respects.

For example, Palin casts his Palin's Pyre spell (with a base cost of 15 points) at a Sivak draconian (Intellect 7). The actual casting of the spell will be 22 points. If Palin allocates only 20 points to the spell, the spell fails — no matter what Palin's action score is — and Palin loses all 20 points. On the other hand, if Palin allocates 25 points to the spell, he loses all 25 points, but the spell succeeds if Palin's action score is 22 or higher.

When calculating the cost of a spell's effect, it's not clear to me when you use the Numeric Adjustments table (Va), and when you use the Other Spell Effects table (Vc). Since the former gives you more bang for the buck, players would obviously prefer to use it, and I'm not sure when you have to use the other table instead.

Generally, use the Numeric Adjustments table whenever you can. Use the Other Spell Effect table only for effects that cannot readily be quantified. For example, using a pyromancy spell to inflict 10 damage points on an ogre is easily handled numerically. Using a pyromancy spell to blind an ogre for a short time would require using the other table — I'd recommend a difficulty adjustment of 3 for a hindering effect.

How does the Narrator resolve the action when one hero casts a spell at another hero? If the first hero simply performs a cast sorcery (or mysticism) action, then the second hero isn't able to play any cards to avoid the effect — which isn't fair. But if the second hero has an avoid sorcery (or mysticism) action as well, then it's rather a case of double jeopardy for the first hero, isn't it? He's got two chances to have his spell fail, which isn't really fair to him either.

When one hero casts a spell at another, the spell's recipient decides if he will resist the spell. If the hero offers no resistance, the spell is cast as a normal hero action. If the hero decides to resist (or the Narrator decides he must resist), then both heroes simultaneously attempt opposed actions. The hero casting the spell attempts his action normally, spending spell points and playing cards to account of the anticipated opposition value. The spell recipient does the same (though he spends no spell points). If the spell casting action fails, the spell has no effect even if the recipient fails his resistance action. If both actions succeed, the higher action score prevails. If both actions are trump, the spell caster com-

pletes all his draws before the recipient draws any cards. In any case, keep all cards face down until everyone involved has played all their cards.

This is indeed "double jeopardy" for the spell caster, but any action pitting two heroes against each other represents a clash of wills and requires card play from both heroes.

The Arms & Armor table doesn't allow for multiple shots with missile weapons. The folks wielding crossbows must be very happy, since the biggest argument for wielding regular bows (two shots a round) has been taken away. Shouldn't there be some game mechanic for reflecting the multiple shots an archer can fire?

Nope. It's one action per hero per combat round. If your hero has a Dexterity code of A, and you're the type of player who wants to use the "best" weapon available, you should carry an arbalest as a missile weapon.

Is there a SAGA game mechanic to reflect the skill of characters when heroes start swinging frying pans at their heads?

Yes. It's called attacking and defending at melee range (swinging frying pans) or attacking and defending at near missile range (throwing frying pans). *Heroes of Steel*, which should be in stores by the time you read this, contains game statistics for improvised weapons — including frying pans (made ever so popular by the fiery Tika), and most other objects heroes might pick up at the spur of the moment and use in combat.

The appearance of the new SAGA system has drawn many questions from the players in my DRAGONLANCE® campaign. One of the biggest concerns was what we can do to convert the new material to the AD&D® system. For example, what are the class level benefits and restrictions for wizards and priests in Krynn now? What are the racial modifiers and benefits for the thinker gnome race and class? Will there be any AD&D formatted monster information on the fire dragon, shadow wraith, frost wraith, and demon warriors?

There is no official SAGA system to AD&D system conversion information, and there are no plans to publish any. If you're trying to carry an existing Fourth Age campaign forward into the Fifth Age, you should go ahead and convert your AD&D player characters and non-player characters into SAGA heroes and charac-

ters. The departure of the gods at the end of the Chaos War has profoundly changed Krynn — the planet is no longer an AD&D game world. Imagine what would happen on Earth if the laws of physics changed overnight, and you have an idea of what has happened on Krynn — the very fabric of reality is now different, and the mortals living on Krynn must live with the reality. Note that most Krynn natives are unaware of the true scope of the change. Everyone knows the gods left and that magic works differently now, but very few are aware of the more subtle changes, such as the switch from classes and hit points to ability codes and hands of Fate cards. To the residents of Krynn, things have always been that way.

If you find it impossible to change your DRAGONLANCE campaign from the AD&D rules, here are some pointers.

For almost 30 years after the Chaos War, nobody on Krynn could cast any spells at all. All scrolls and spellbooks went blank when the gods left, and all potions turned to water (see *The Last Tower*, available in December, for details). Wizards must go without spells until after the Last Conclave convenes in 28 sc. Priests regain their spells a little sooner, after the founding of the Citadel of Light in 8 sc. Until the rediscovery of spells, wizards and priests have to rely on their magical items to produce magical effects. Once spells start working again, the best way to simulate Krynn magic in the AD&D game is to use the spell point system from Chapter 6 of the *PLAYER'S OPTION™: Spells & Magic* book. Because no one on Krynn memorizes spells anymore, characters must expend their spell points as free magicks (see Spells & Magic, page 77). Note also that no character can use more than three different schools of sorcery (wizard spells) or spheres of mysticism (priest magic). Remember that wizards cannot directly affect living creatures (spells such as sleep and *charm* person don't work for wizards anymore). Likewise, priests cannot affect inanimate matter (spells such as *stone shape* don't work for priests). It is possible for a character to cast both priest and wizard spells, however, through careful use of the AD&D game's multi- and dual-class rules.

I'd treat tinker gnomes as regular AD&D gnomes with the following exceptions: 1) they cannot become illusionists, 2) tinker gnome thieves have a +15% bonus to Find/Remove Traps and Open Locks attempts, 3) tinker gnomes must

choose one of the following for initial proficiencies: blacksmithing, cobbling, leatherworking, mining, or bowyer/fletcher, and 4) their maximum fighter level is 15.

When converting SAGA creatures to the AD&D system, just take the conversion rules from the little screen in the DRAGONLANCE: FIFTH AGE boxed set and apply them in reverse. The results might look like this for a large fire dragon:

Saga Statistic	AD&D Statistic
Coordination 12	Movement 12, F1 24 (C)
Physique 70	Hit Dice 24
Intellect 4	Intelligence Average (8-10)
Essence 4	Morale Average (8-10)
Damage +65	Damage 2d6+6/ 2d6+6/ 10d8+14
Defense -40	Armor Class -12

I made the conversions as follows:

Coordination to movement: Double Coordination to get the creature's fastest movement rate. Since a dragon flies, I assigned it a flying movement rate of 24 (12x2) with a maneuverability class of C and a ground move of 12, in keeping with the statistics for other AD&D dragons. (One can't avoid some judgment calls in this process.)

Physique to hit dice: Divide Physique by 3 and round up to get hit dice ($70 \div 3 = 23.33$ rounded up to 24). The creature's THAC0, saving throws, and experience value are derived from the creature's hit dice rating.

Intellect to Intelligence: Double Intellect (4x2=8) and assign the creature the appropriate rating from the Intelligence section in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL™* tome.

Essence to Morale: Double Essence (4x2=8) and assign the creature the appropriate rating from the Morale section in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL* tome.

Damage: Double the damage rating ($65 \times 2 = 130$). The result is the maximum damage caused by all the creature's attacks. You have to play this one by ear, I gave the fire dragon a claw/claw/bite attack routine (18+18+94=130). If you wish to add other dragon melee attack forms (such as wing buffets and tail slaps), you should lower the claw and bite damage a bit.

Defense to Armor Class: Double the SAGA rating and subtract from 10. Note that -10 is usually the best AC an AD&D creature can have unless it is very large or very powerful or both. The fire dragon's -40 defense is equal to a great

wyrm gold dragon's -12 AC. Here's a table for quick conversions:

Defense	Rating	Armor Class
0		10
-1		8 or 9
-2		6 or 7
-3		4 or 5
-4		2 or 3
-5		0 or 1
-6		-2 or -1
-7		-4 or -3
-8		-6 or -5
-9		-8 or -7
-10 or higher		-10 or -9

Other Abilities: Spell-like abilities and special defenses must be handled on a case-by-case basis. A fire dragon has the ability to create dragon fear as a great wyrm dragon and is immune to all fire-based attacks and to weapons of less than +3 enchantment. Its breath weapon is similar to a red dragon's (a cone 90' long, 5' wide at the dragon's mouth, and 30' wide at the far end). The fiery blast inflicts 10d10+40 hp damage (maximum 140 points, which is twice the dragon's Physique score); a successful saving throw vs. breath weapons reduces damage by half.

Other statistics, such as home terrain, diet, treasure, and alignment, must be assigned using similar AD&D creatures as guides. Fire dragons are at home in any land terrain, usually appear singly, and are very rare. They can be active throughout the day. If they eat anything, they probably consume fire sources, such as magma. They collect no treasure.

Complete adventure statistics might look like this:

Large Fire Dragon: AC -12; MV 12, Fl 24 (C); HD 24; hp 108; THAC0 -3; #AT 3; Dmg 2d6+6/2d6+6/10d8+14 (claw/claw/bite); SA causes fear, breath weapon; SD immune to fire and weapons of less than +3 enchantment; SZ G (200' body); ML average (8-10); Int average (8-10); AL CE; XP 24,000.



Skip Williams was a member of the team that produced the SAGA game system and the DRAGONLANCE: FIFTH AGE world. He has written two FIFTH AGE products: *Heroes of Steel* and *The Last Tower*.

Knights of the Dinner Table™

By Jolly R. Blackburn

I ASKED YOU GUYS TO COME EARLY TONIGHT SO WE COULD TALK BEFORE BOB GETS HERE. EVERY FEW YEARS THE POOR GUY THINKS HE HAS WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A GAMEMASTER. HE'S BEEN HOUNDING ME FOR THREE WEEKS WANTING TO TAKE THE HELM AND RUN A GAME. I CAN'T TAKE IT ANY MORE SO I'M LETTING BOB RUN AN ADVENTURE TONIGHT. SO JUST GO WITH THE FLOW. LET HIM DO HIS THING AND NEXT WEEK THINGS RETURN TO NORMAL.

BOB'S RUNNING THE GAME TONIGHT? REALLY? THIS I GOT TO SEE.

B.A. YOU SHOULDN'T FEEL IT'S A TERRIBLE IMPOSITION. YOU SHOULD BE FLATTERED. IN A WAY IT RESEMBLES THE SON WANTING TO BE LIKE THE FATHER. YOU SHOULD ENCOURAGE HIM TO TAKE ON CHALLENGES. THINK OF IT AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO PASS ON YOUR SKILLS AND EXPERTISE TO THE FUTURE.

SARA, I'M IMPRESSED. YOU QUOTED APPENDIX C OF THE **HACKMASTER GM'S GUIDE** NEARLY VERBATIM. A LOT OF GAMERS NEVER REALLY BOTHER TO READ THAT SECTION.

LATER...

UH ... HEY GUYS. SORRY I'M LATE. I STOPPED BY **WEIRD PETE'S** SHOP TO SEE IF HE'D CRITIQUE THE ADVENTURE I PREPARED FOR TONIGHT. YOU KNOW PETE, HE GOT A LITTLE CARRIED AWAY. I FINALLY HAD TO GRAB ALL MY NOTES AND MAKE A DASH FOR THE DOOR.

NOW I DON'T WANT YOU GUYS PULLING YOUR PUNCHES BECAUSE I'M THE NEW GUY. I'M LIKE A SPONGE. I'VE BEEN SITTING ACROSS FROM THIS SCREEN FOR YEARS AND TAKING IN EVERYTHING. SO DON'T GET THE IDEA BOB DOESN'T KNOW HIS PEAS AND QUESSTICKS.

WE HAVE FULL CONFIDENCE IN YOU BOB. BESIDES, IT'S JUST A GAME. WE WOULDN'T FAULT YOU FOR BEING LESS THAN PERFECT YOUR FIRST TIME OUT.

"JUST A GAME?"

STILL LATER ...

OKAY, YOU OPEN THE DOOR AND YOU SEE TWO CHARIOTS PARKED SIDE BY SIDE IN THE MIDDLE OF A LARGE ROOM. ALONG THE NORTH WALL IS A LONG WOODEN BENCH WITH HAND TOOLS. THE ENTIRE SOUTH WALL IS ACTUALLY A DOOR. AT YOUR FEET IS A LARGE RUG COVERING A SPIKED PIT — I MEAN A RUG! IT'S JUST A NORMAL RUG.

COME ON DUDE ADMIT IT! THIS IS YOUR DAD'S GARAGE! THE LAST ROOM WAS YOUR KITCHEN, AND BEFORE THAT YOUR SISTER'S BEDROOM.

WELL, WE WON'T NEED TO BOTHER MAPPING.

SISTER'S BEDROOM? AAAH! I HAD THEM ALL FIGURED OUT BUT THAT ONE.

WHEN YOU OPEN THE DOOR YOU FIND, UH, YOU FIND A HUGE, UH, A HUGE ROOM. YEAH, A HUGE ROOM. AND IT'S, UH, IT'S FILLED WITH A THOUSAND AND ONE ORCS. YEAH. AND THEY ALL HAVE, UH, DAGGERS! AND UH, THE ROOM IS PAINTED RED. AND THERE'S DIRT ON THE FLOOR. AND UH ... IT SMELLS REALLY BAD. AND ...

BINGO! TWO-CAR GARAGE.

HOURS PASS...

OKAY DAVE, YOU KILLED HIM. THE NEXT ORC STEPS INTO HIS POSITION. ROLL FOR INITIATIVE. B.A., YOU KILLED YOUR ORC. ANOTHER ONE STEPS UP. ROLL FOR INIT. SARA YOU KILLED YOUR ORC. ANOTHER STEPS UP. BRIAN, YOUR FIREBALL TOOK OUT 27 ORCS. AND 27 MORE ORCS MOVE FORWARD OVER THEIR BODIES.

AFTER THE GAME

WELL, I THINK THAT WENT PRETTY GOOD. WHAT DID YOU GUYS THINK?

WELL, UH, CRAMMING ONE THOUSAND AND ONE ORCS IN TO A 20 BY 20 ROOM WAS REALLY A NOVEL IDEA. YOU ... UH ... YOU DID GREAT, BOB.

IT SOUNDS LIKE A NICE PLACE BOB. I FEEL LIKE I'VE BEEN THERE.

I JUST WISH THAT **ONE** ORC HADN'T GOTTEN AWAY.

DragonMirth



By Mathew Guss



By Mark Doney



"Either that Horn Of Blasting goes or you go!"

By Steamy



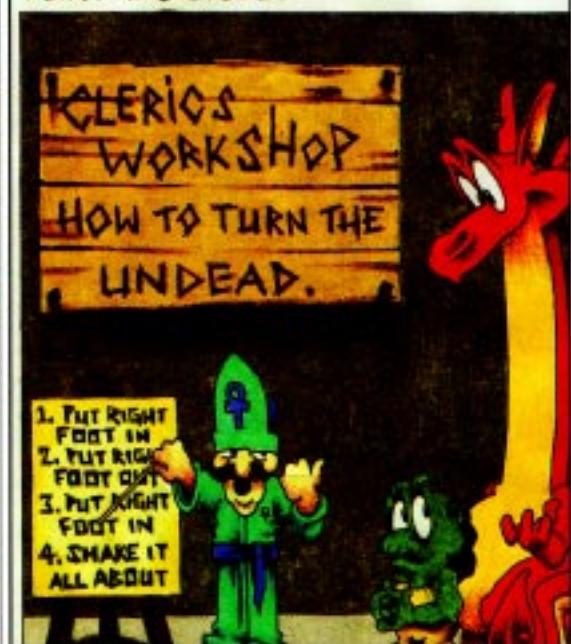
"However, my strategy in Ravenloft was quite different, General."

By James B. Cannan



FLINT AND STEEL By Bill Hrenchuk

FLINT AND STEEL



"When you do the 'Hoakie-Pokie' you turn them all around."



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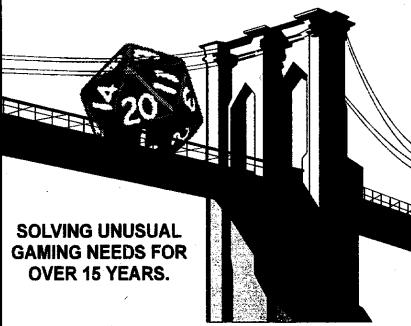


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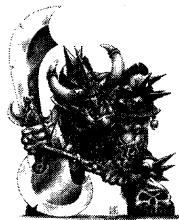
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FLOYD

Written
and
Illustrated by
Aaron Williams

AH! HOME, SWEET
HOME! TIME TO BREW
SOME STEW!

STEW? I THOUGHT
WE HAD ENOUGH MEAT
FOR STIR-FRY!

OH, YEAH...
TWO HUMAN
STEW IT IS!

NOW, DON'T
GO ANYWHERE,
YOU TWO!

WHAT DO THEY
WANT FROM US?

PROTEIN.
I'M AFRAID.

WHAT ABOUT
BENJAMIN?

GET A NEW
JOKE, LIVINGSTON!
YOU'VE TOLD THAT ONE
TO OUR LAST SIX
DINNERS!

HAVE I? SORRY!
HOW ABOUT 'ENJOY
YOUR DOOM WITH
A VIEW'?

HOW ABOUT APOLOGIZING
TO THEM FOR ADDING TORTURE
TO THEIR WOES? NOW HELP
ME WITH THE STEWPOT!

I WOULDN'T WORRY
ABOUT HIM. OL' BEN'S
TOUGHER THAN YOU
THINK. NOW...

FLOYD, IT'S TIME FOR
YOU TO LEARN A SPELL
THAT MAY GET YOU OUT
OF THIS MESS.

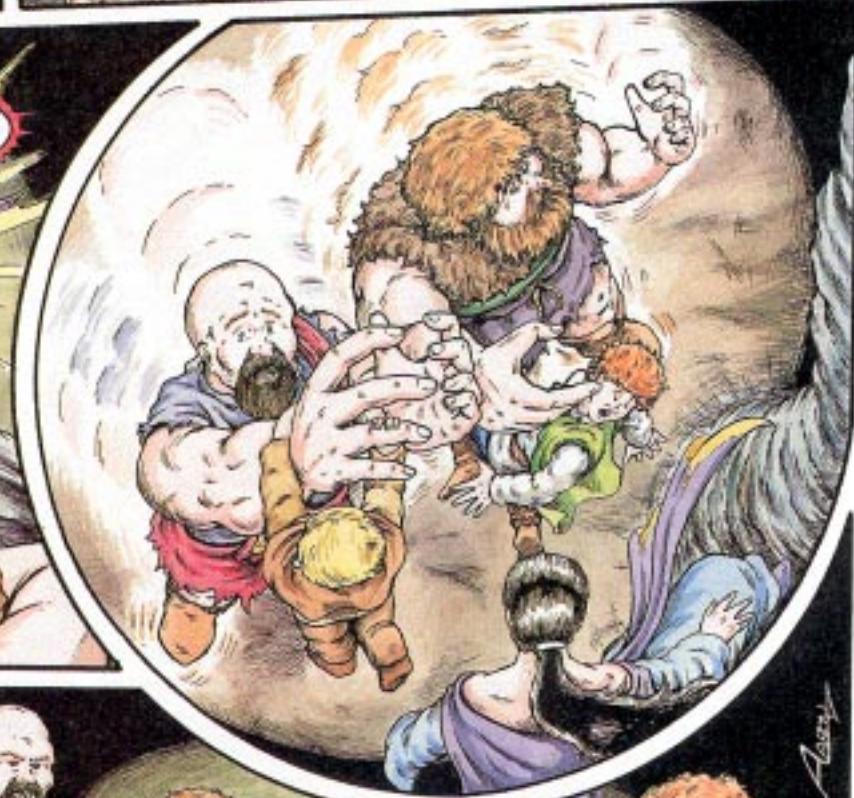
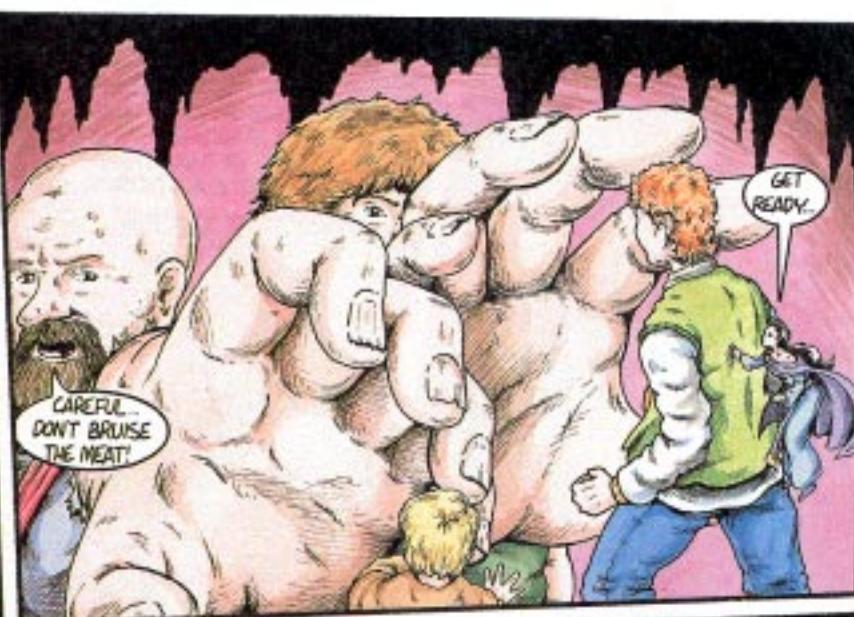
UM, CARMEN? YOU
SAID THAT ME CASTING
SPELLS WAS A BAD IDEA!

IT IS, BUT YOU
TWO BEING EATEN IS
MARGINALLY WORSE.

MARGINALLY?

SHUT UP AND
LEARN, OKAY? SO,
SINCE YOU ALREADY KNOW
THE RUNIC FORMS, THIS
SHOULD BE EASY...





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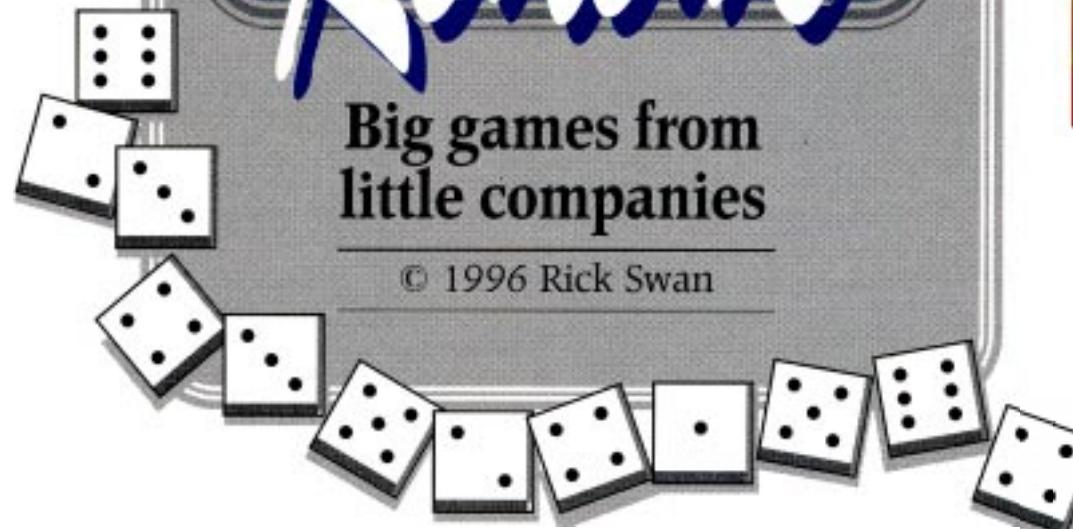
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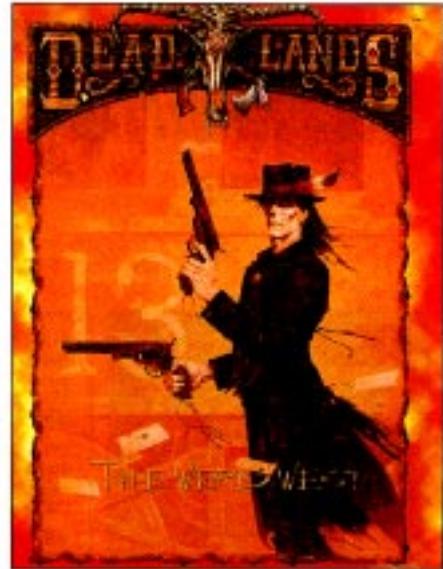
© 1996 Rick Swan



Maybe you're too cool, sophisticated, or cheap to spend your money on games from small press publishers, the little guys who make do with last year's computer, a line of credit at the copy shop, and a loan from grandma to cover the bills. If so, you're missing out. Why? Well, there's the obvious reason: the small press has been a font of inspiration for the entire industry; products as diverse as the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS*® and *Vampire: The Masquerade** games essentially began as small press publications. But there's a less obvious reason too: the small press has spawned some the hobby's most coveted collector's items. The *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* game, for instance, crawled out of Gary Gygax's basement in the form of three flimsy little pamphlets. They weren't much to look at, and they didn't play all that well, but tell the truth — don't you wish you had a set? As for *Vampire: The Masquerade*, designer Mark Rein Hagen once told me that the initial draft was conceived when he was "living on \$40 a month and bicycling to the laundromat." Whether you're a *Vampire* lover or not,

wouldn't you love to have a copy of the laundromat version?

You've probably never heard of the games under the microscope this month, let alone the companies who made them. But who knows? The *Deadlands** game may turn out to be the next *Vampire*. Pinnacle Entertainment may turn out to be the next TSR. Here's your chance to get in on the ground floor. And you might even end up with some collector's items that'll have your grandkids drooling with envy.



Deadlands game

224-page softcover book
Pinnacle Entertainment
Group, Inc. \$25

Design: Shane Lacy Hensley

Development: Michelle Hensley, John Hopler, Matt Forbeck, and Greg Gorden

Editing: Matt Forbeck, Michelle Hensley, Jason Nichols, and Hal Mangold

Illustrations: Susan M. Bowen, Steve Bryant, Paul Daly, Jay Lloyd Neal, Allen Nunis, Ron Spencer, and Loston Wallace

Cover: Brom

I've had my heart broken plenty of times, so you'd think after Kay Eilliason refused to go to my high school prom, Random House rejected my proposal for a history of the Beach Boys, and the debut of *Star Trek: Voyager*, I'd be used to it. Not so. Take *Deadlands*, for example. My hopes were high. The buzz at the *GEN CON*® Game Fair was strong. The cover looked great. But . . . well, I'm getting ahead of myself.

Turn to page 20 of the rulebook, and take a gander at the illustration of the Old West sheriff, flat on his back, a tentacle lodged in his mouth. That's *Deadlands* in a nutshell: silly, outrageous, irresistible. The year is 1876, thirteen years after sinister spirits called the Manitous oozed their way across the nation, prolonging the Civil War, unleashing hordes of life-leeching fiends, and transforming the west coast into a warzone of spell-casting shamans and ghost-wrangling gunslingers. Veteran designer Shane Lacy Hensley nails the tongue-in-cheek tone in the

opening lines: "Howdy, Marshal. Thought ya might be gettin' up soon. Those tinhorns that planted ya didn't realize you wuz already dead . . . And pull that worm outta yer ear." Yep, it's *Bonanza* meets *Tales from the Crypt*. Not since the *Shadowrun** game, with its revolutionary mix of fantasy and cyberpunk, has a cross-pollination had so much potential.

The engaging character types range from Bounty Hunters and Cowpokes to Saloon Gals and Snake Oil Salesman. After selecting an archetype, the player deals himself a dozen cards from a standard poker deck. He throws out two cards of his choice, then consults the Trait Die Table to determine the number of points generated by each remaining card; a deuce generates 1d4 points, a king generates 1d10. He assigns each set of points to one of ten Traits, such as Deftness, Quickness, Nimbleness, Smarts, and Strength. A fixed number of Aptitude Points are spent on a menu of skills that includes Medicine, Persuasion, and about 60 other options. The player may also customize his PC with advantages (Mechanically Inclined, Sense of Direction, Tough as Nails), and disadvantages (All Thumbs, Bad Eyes, Illiterate), so long as the point total of the former equals the point total of the latter. Despite a few problems — the differences between Deftness, Quickness, and Nimbleness are more obvious to the designer than they are to me — the system produces lively, beguiling characters.

To resolve an action, the player rolls a number of dice associated with the rating in the relevant aptitude or skill. The die with the highest result is used to determine the outcome. For instance, a Cowpoke attempting to navigate his steed over a treacherous mountain trail might need to make a Horse Riding roll to prevent a tumble over the cliff. His Horse Riding rating, let's say, is 3d8. He rolls and gets a 2, 3, and 5; he uses the 5. The gamemaster consults the Difficulty Table; the 5 produces only a Fair outcome. Not good enough. Goodbye, Cowpoke.

Combat expands on the skill rules. Action cards — again, cards from an ordinary deck — determine initiative. Nimbleness ratings generate movement speeds. Shooting involves range modifiers, target size, and special maneuvers like called shots and fanning. To resolve attacks, die-rolls are compared to the relevant aptitude and skill ratings. To assess damage, the gamemaster con-

sults the Damage Steps Table, the Armor Table, the Wound Effects Table, and the Stun & Recovery Table. It's a bit convoluted — the result, I suspect, of the designer trying too hard to be different — but it works reasonably well.

Too bad the effort that went into the combat system wasn't invested in the setting, because what we're given is little more than an overview. The book opens with a fascinating historical summary, describing the coming of the Manitou, the steam wagon assault on Washington, and the ghost rock mines of California. But it's downhill from there. Yes, we get an enticing magic system, based on passages from Hoyle's *Book of Games*. Yes, we get engaging gizmos like freeze rays and rocket packs. And yes, we get a zooful of creepy beasts: wall crawlers, devil bats, prairie ticks. But there are no interesting personalities to speak of. There's next to nothing about geography, politics, or culture. Cities, villages, places to explore — practically none. And there's not a single ready-to-play adventure. To test the system, I had to adapt an old *Call of Cthulhu** game scenario, which took me all day. Boo! Hiss!

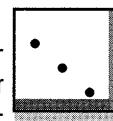
Evaluation: *Deadlands* is by no means bad. It's beautifully written and bursting with nifty ideas. It strikes a masterful balance between high camp and high adventure. It has a great cover. But it's incomplete; with a setting this skeletal and the absence of adventures, how's a newcomer supposed to cobble together a campaign? If I were the cynical type, I'd suspect the omissions were intentional — if you wanna fill in the blanks, then you gotta buy the supplements (and according to the ads, there's an avalanche on the way). I oughta be strong. I oughta walk away. But *Deadlands* is so attractive, so full of promise, I know I'll be coming back for more. God help me — it's Kay Ellason all over again. (Information: Pinnacle Entertainment Group, Inc., PO Box 10908, Blacksburg, VA 24062-0908.)

Neverworld* game

One 294-page softcover book, one 118-page softcover book, one three-panel gamemaster screen, one note pad, one double-sided reference card, one 22' x 32' map sheet, two 10-sided dice, boxed

ForEverWorld Books \$38

Design: Erin Laughlin and Craig Sheeley with Richard E. Diaz, Jim Fries, Troy Delzer, and D. Scott Grant



Editing: David M. McCandless

Illustrations: Chuck Bordell, Catherine H. Burnett, Ron Chironna, Gary Kwapisz, Paul Lyons, Christopher Martinex, and John Mundt

Cover: Randy Asplund'Faith and Erin Laughlin

First, the not-so-good news. Though it boasts a lavish package — over 400 pages of text and a box packed with goodies — *Neverworld* suffers from a tired concept. We're in fantasy land here, a land the designers describe as "a sliver of time . . . [where] the key to survival is knowledge. Each culture on this world has its own secrets . . . Along the way, there will be danger, monsters, challenges, and rewards beyond counting." That could describe the *RuneQuest** game, the *Earthdawn** game, or any of the umpteen other Tolkien-inspired, medieval-flavored, epic-style RPGs from the previous umpteen years. And *Neverworld's* menagerie — elves, dragons, dwarves, giants — doesn't exactly distinguish it in a crowded field.

Worse, like *Deadlands*, *Neverworld* suffers from setting malnutrition. The designers decline to reveal many of the world's details. Instead, they encourage the gamemaster to construct the setting, himself. The poster map tells the story: it shows blobs of color representing theoretical territories, but doesn't have a single word of text. Thoughtful suggestions in the "Building Your World" chapter nudge the gamemaster in the right direction, but constructing a functional setting requires, to put it mildly, some work. If you expect to play *Neverworld* right out of the box . . . well, it ain't gonna happen.

Now the good news. *Neverworld* may fall short in the setting department, but when it comes to character creation, it soars into the stratosphere. Roughly 300 pages of the rulebooks pertain to the PCs, covering every quirk, nuance, and freckle. To begin the process, the player chooses a race and culture (in basic *Neverworld*, all PCs are Metamorphoun Hourani, benevolent werewolves with rigid social structures). Based on this information, the player derives the PC's age, eye color, height, weight, and other physical characteristics. He then selects the PC's Pathway, *Neverworld's* version of AD&D® game's alignment. Ratings are assigned to 15 attributes, including Strength, Confidence, and Charisma. The PC also gets some skills (Athletics, Terrain

Knowledge, History), a career (Medic, Sage, Archer), and a slate of combat stats (Offensive Combat Factor, Weapon Advantage Bonuses, Heal Rate).

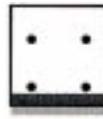
And you haven't even *started* yet. There's a formula for determining the PC's birthday. There's a formula for determining how likely he'll be able to wake up on command (no kidding — it's called the Sleep Level). If he's the spell-casting type, there are formulas for psionic potential and sphere powers. And on. And on. And on. It sounds like grunt work, I know, but — who would've guessed? — turns out it's a heck of an entertaining way to spend a weekend. Thanks to the clever integration of attribute ratings and cultural preferences, *Neverworld* PCs aren't just jumbles of numbers. They're so realistic, you expect them to jump off the page and dance the Macarena.

Executing a simple, unopposed action — like dancing the Macarena — requires the player to roll 1d00, add the base skill rating, factor in the action's difficulty, then finding the result on the Rolling Outcome Chart. A roll of 1-29 indicates failure, 40-49 means marginal success, 90 or more is a triumph. But as situations become more complex, computations become more demanding. If your PC is dancing on the edge of a cliff while somebody's lobbing water balloons at him, you may have to grapple with accumulation tests, advantage saves, and toppling formulas. But all in all, the system's manageable.

Then along comes combat, and it's aspirin time. The designers apparently threw in every modifier they could think of, resulting in a system that rivals an Avalon Hill military simulation in complexity. I can't begin to summarize the rules, but here's a taste (from the advanced rules, necessary for "realistic combat situations"): "To determine a character's Initiative for the round, roll d100 and add his initiative base, which is equal to (5 x Refl) plus (5 x Awar) minus encumbrance difficulty." Want to determine the damage from an acid attack? Then you better know the acid's pH level ([7 - pH level] x damage base equals damage per round). Though combat this detailed might appeal to die-hard wargamers, it's a stone drag for guys like me who just want to get on with the story. Does the system work? I *think* so, but there are so many variables to consider, I'm not really sure.

Evaluation: I can't recommend *Neverworld* for the mechanics, since the

combat rules gave me a headache. Nor can I recommend it for its rich setting, since it doesn't have one. And I can't recommend it for its fully developed scenarios, since it doesn't have any of those either. Can I recommend it for its impressive character creation system? Let me put it this way: If you're an Indiana Jones kinda guy who thrives on adventure and can't wait to dive head first into the unknown, there's not much here. But if you're a Dr. Frankenstein kinda guy who loves to fiddle with every bolt and stitch of your creations, *Neverworld* is nirvana. (Information: ForEverWorld Books, PO Box 430, Manitowoc, WI 54221-0430.)



110-page softcover book
Infinite Concepts \$17

Design: Steve Hemmesch
Editing: Robert Hill, Kathryn Potter, and Jeff Tyler

Illustrations: Anthony Shrock, Damion McDunn, and Pat Thomas
Cover: uncredited

Dense blocks of text. Blah illustrations. Dead gray cover. Well, it *looks* generic, that's for sure. Like the *Gurps** game, the granddaddy of generic RPGs, and the feisty *Fudge** game (reviewed in *DRAGON*® Magazine issue #225), **Infinite Domains** bills itself as a universal role-playing system, adaptable to any genre and any game world. That's a tough act to pull off, as evidenced by the *Eternal Soldier**, *Multiverse**, and *Worlds of Wonder** games, whose corpses reside in the cemetery of the obsolete. Further, **Infinite Domains** promises to be quick,

simple, and flexible, which puts it on dangerous ground. As my mama used to say, be wary of making promises that might be hard to keep.

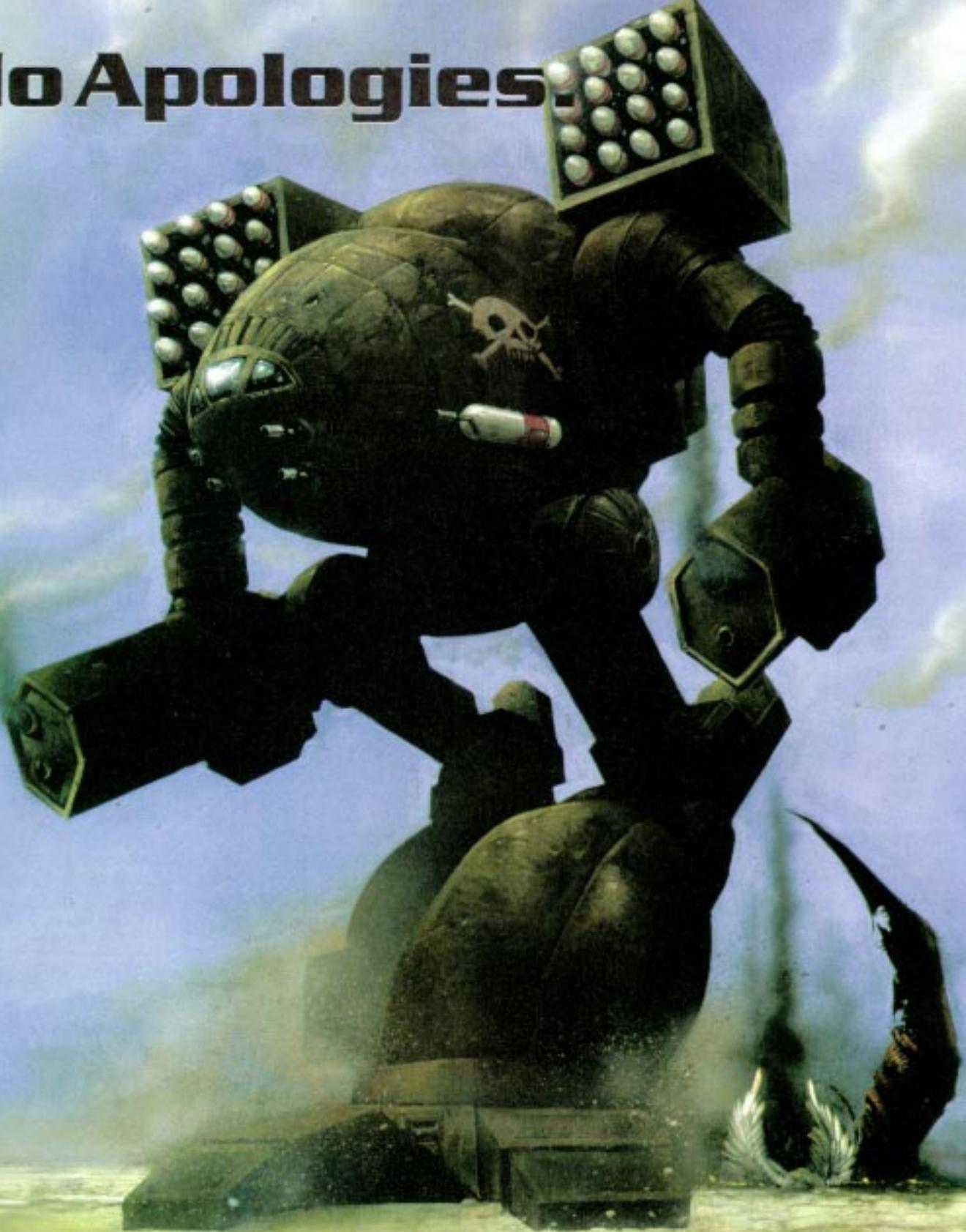
But **Infinite Domains** gets off to an auspicious start with a streamlined character creation system that's a notch shy of spectacular. Die-rolls determine ratings for eight basic attributes: Affinity, Control, Dexterity, Intellect, Speed, Strength, Vitality, and Luck. Simple formulas determine Endurance, Movement, and seven other secondary attributes. A choice of career (Warrior, Professional, Magus) directs you to a selection of skills (Acrobatics, Riding, Brawling), purchased with points. Add physical characteristics (using the Height & Weight Chart and Appearance Table) and a personal history (consult the Family Background Table) and you've got yourself a PC. What makes the system shine are its clutter-free formulas and elegant details. To calculate the Endurance rating, for instance, all you have to do is multiply the Vitality rating by 10. The Nimble Fingers skill not only helps you manipulate small weapons, but also boosts your aptitude for surgery. Character creation doesn't get much cleaner — or smarter — than this.

Better yet is the Action Point system, used to resolve virtually every action in the game. Each PC has an Action Point total equal to one third of his Speed rating. Every action — moving, spell-casting, Macarena dancing — costs a certain number of Action Points. In a six-second round, a PC may attempt any action he likes, in any order he likes, until he runs out of Action Points. Thus, he's not at the mercy of an arbitrary turn sequence. If he wants to dance, then move, that's fine. If he wants to move, then dance, that's fine, too.

In most cases, determining the outcome of a particular action requires a single die-roll. The relevant skill rating equals the base percent chance of success. Therefore, a Dancing skill of 31 means the player must roll 31 or less on percentile dice to execute a first-rate Macarena. Modifiers may be applied as the gamemaster sees fit; if the floor's slippery, the gamemaster might call for a 10-point penalty.

Combat is more complicated, but not significantly so. Before they roll their dice, combatants must choose Attack and Defense Actions (like Slash, Punch, Block, Sweep, and Bite). Initiative is determined. Whoever goes first fiddles with a few modifiers, rolls the necessary dice, then refers to the chart corre-

No Apologies.



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sponding to his Action; if he's attacking with a knife, for instance, he consults the Slash Attack Chart. If he injures his target, damage points are subtracted from the target's Health rating. Despite all the die-rolling and chart-checking, the rules encourage wild, bloody free-for-alls, which gives combat the loony energy of a Rambo movie.

I don't want to oversell *Infinite Domains*, as it contains a fair number of flaws. The intriguing but underdeveloped magic system raises as many questions as it answers (like, what exactly's the difference between a mana thread and a mana cord, and why do I need to know?). Imprecise language makes for head-scratching prose; hardness, for instance, is described as "a rating for materials that shows how hard the material is." On occasion, the game suffers from fuzzy logic; why must one wait four weeks before purchasing a new skill?

Evaluation: On balance, though, *Infinite Domains* keeps its promises. Is it quick? Yep, surprisingly so; you can cook up a character in 20 minutes. Is it simple? For the most part, yes; if you can multiply two numbers, you can handle the math. Is it flexible? Absolutely; designer Steve Hemmesch provides options on every page. (You don't like the Luck attribute? "Remove it," says Hemmesch.). For do-it-yourselfers in the market for a universal system, *Infinite Domains* makes an excellent alternative to *Gurps* and *Fudge*; it's less demanding than the former, more serious than the latter. But remember: *Infinite Domains* has no setting, scenarios, or NPCs. It's only a frame. You have to provide the picture. (Information: Infinite Concepts, 6129 18th St. N., St. Cloud, MN 56303.)

Short and sweet

Mage: The Ascension Second Edition* game, by Phil Brucato and Stewart Wieck. White Wolf Game Studio, \$28. ***Star Wars Revised and Expanded Second Edition* game***, by Bill Smith, Peter Schweighofer, George R. Strayton, Eric S. Trautmann, and Greg Farshtey. West End Games, \$30.

If you bought First Edition *Mage* or the Unrevised and Unexpanded Second Edition *Star Wars*, you may be tempted to send the publisher a letter bomb. You bought the game once already. Now you're supposed to buy it again? Sure, they're great products. *Mage* remains the most playable and least goofy entry in the World of Darkness line. *Star Wars* stands as the definitive space opera

RPG. But do you really need to fork over your hard-earned dough for the — grumble — "improved" versions?

Depends. In the case of *Mage*, yes you do. Brucato serves up a top-to-bottom overhaul of Wieck's mind-bending but muddy original, ironing out the system ambiguities and translating the jargon-riddled text into clear English. In short, Edition Two makes Edition One read like a rough draft — which in a sense, it was.

In the case of *Star Wars*, no you don't. If you've got Second Edition Number One you don't need Second Edition Number Two. (Confusing, isn't it?) With some minor exceptions — more examples of play, an index, a prettier package — Number Two is essentially a clone of Number One. If you already own Number One, however, the nice guys at West End will send you an upgrade containing all the nips and tucks from Number Two, free of charge. (Send a self-addressed envelope with 64 cents postage to West End Games, Attn: Star Wars Rules Upgrade, RR 3, Box 2345, Honesdale, PA 18431.)

As to those of you who've never played either game in any version and wonder what the fuss is about, you can: (1) check out the reviews of the originals in *DRAGON Magazine** issues #202 (*Mage*) and #199 (*Star Wars*), or (2) drop me a line at the address at the end of this column — enclosing a self-addressed envelope with a stamp on it — and I'll fill you in. For I, too, am a nice guy.

Chaos Progenitus * game, by Lester Smith. Destination Games, \$10.

Yikes! Boxed fiends! Lester Smith, creator of the *DRAGON DICE*™ game (reviewed in *DRAGON Magazine* issue #225) is back again with another bone-rolling extravaganza, and it's a goodie. Each box contains 13 colorful six-siders, enough to assemble a grotesque entity from the Dark Dimension, who's sole goal in life is to shred its companions to smithereens. Individual dice represent body parts (brain, arm, eye, leg, lung) and items (sword, shield, whip, bellows, trident). Both body and item dice contain combat icons (plus, minus, hit, move, block). After determining initiative, the active player sets aside a number of dice equal to the number of minus icons rolled in the opponent's previous turn. The active player then rolls all of his remaining dice, sets aside his minus icons (which will be used on the next turn), and matches the remain-

ing dice against the dice of his opponent. Each die has a unique effect: a lung exhales a cloud of choking gas, a bellows dispels the cloud. A fiend bites the dust when it runs out of body parts. Though it lacks the scope of *DRAGON DICE*

— *DRAGON DICE* deals with armies, ***Chaos Progenitus*** deals with individual, er, things — it's just as addictive. And nearly as collectible; I'd love to get my hands on one of those Stench Fiend cubes. (Information: Destination Games, P.O. Box 1345, Lake Geneva, WI 53147.

I, Tyrant, by Aaron Allston. TSR, Inc., \$18.

Aaron Allston's association with the AD&D game stretches from 1986's *Treasure Hunt* adventure to the recent *Complete Ninja's Handbook*, and he's never failed to dazzle. ***I, Tyrant*** an exhaustive examination of the beholder, is another notch in his belt. With sparkling prose, Allston describes the giant eyeball's daily routine (it crawls out of bed about 5:30 A.M.), its least favorite foods (hard-boiled eggs, grapes, mountain oysters), even its digestive system (its droppings resemble a cross between sand and sedimentary rock). Nobody, and I mean nobody, matches Allston's flair for language and imaginative vignettes. This guy deserves a statue in the park.

Gurps Goblins, by Malcolm Dale and Klaude Thomas. Steve Jackson Games, \$22. ***Gurps Alternate Earths***, by Kenneth Hite, Craig Neumeier, and Michael S. Schiffer. Steve Jackson Games, \$18.

These off-the-wall, one-of-a-kind *Gurps* game supplements turn out to be two of the best in many a moon. ***Goblins***, a full-blown campaign setting staged in 19th century London, features what may be the most obnoxious creations in all of gamedom, a race of drooling, drunken miscreants whose idea of a good time is mugging old ladies. ***Alternate Earths*** presents six parallel worlds with haywire history, such as the Confederate States of America (where the Omaha Black Sox play the Mexico City Aztecs in the World Series) and Reich-5 (where you-know-who won World War II). What sends these books to the head of the class? First, they're adaptable. The material translates to other game systems with a minimum of tweaking. Second, they're funny. ***Alternate Earths*** features rock star Jerry Lee Swaggart and time traveling Nazis; ***Goblins*** includes sidebars like "The Goblin With the Loveliest Legs" and "Madame Restell's Life-Destroying

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Crochet Hook." Goblins earns extra credit for its color illustrations, enabling us to savor the vivid hues of goblin acne.

The Planewalker's Handbook, by Monte Cook. TSR, Inc., \$20.

The PLANESCAPE® setting is arguably the AD&D game's most daunting arena. You think it's hard finding your way around a planet? Try navigating an infinity of universes. Hapless berks need all the guidance they can get, which is why ***The Planewalker's Handbook*** makes an indispensable escort. Not only does it have the character kits, new proficiencies, and other elements common to the *Complete Handbook* series, it also tells you how to get from here to there (use a wooden mallet to knock open a portal in the Plane of Ooze), where to go (avoid the pocket demiplanes in the Deep Ethereal), and what to take (a blindfold will protect your eyes from the radiance of the Inner Planes). Additionally, it features the clearest explanations to date of the differences between the factions, presented as witty reminiscences of the members themselves. (Tava of the Fated: "By just taking the bag of jink, I showed that I deserved it, 'cause no one was able to stop me.") An hour or two with the

Handbook, and you'll be planewalking with them best of 'em.

The Kingdoms of Kalamar, by Kenzer and Company. Kenzer and Company Publishers, \$30.

Say you're a *Neverworld* or *Infinite Domains* gamemaster, and you need a generic fantasy setting for your generic fantasy system. Welcome to ***The Kingdoms of Kalamar***, an elaborate boxed set containing two lush color maps and nearly 200 pages of background material about the planet Tellene. Especially nice is the religion section, describing a charming pantheon of deities that includes Mother Tellene, Queen of Green Pastures and Rotlord, Prince of Pestilence. Though the mythos doesn't stray far from the traditional — we're talking untamed frontiers, powerful wizards, and adorable elves — the mountain of campaign fodder should be enough to keep your players busy until they're ready for the rest home. (information: Kenzer & Company, 1935 S. Plum Grove Road, Suite 194, Palatine, IL 60067.)

Crisis *game, by The Hain Brothers. Hain Bros. Publishing, \$30.

This board game for grown-ups combines the *Life** and *Careers** games with the world view of Beavis and Butt-head. Players begin with a few bucks in the bank and a vehicle from Wacky Keith Wiley's Auto Hut, then embark on a lifetime of misery and frustration. Along the way, they take lousy jobs as grave diggers and chicken pluckers, and endure humiliating accidents like pitbull attacks and exploding barbecue grills. Whoever staggers to the finish line with the most money wins. Yeah, it's cheesy, but on its own low-brow terms, it's pretty entertaining. Butt-heads of the world, this one's for you. (Information: Hain Bros., P.O. Box 6616, Evanston, IL 60204.



Rick Swan, designer and editor of nearly 50 role-playing products, has squandered a sizable chunk of his life playing games. But why stop now? Write him at 2620 30th Street, Des Moines, IA 50310. Enclose a self-addressed envelope if you'd like a reply.

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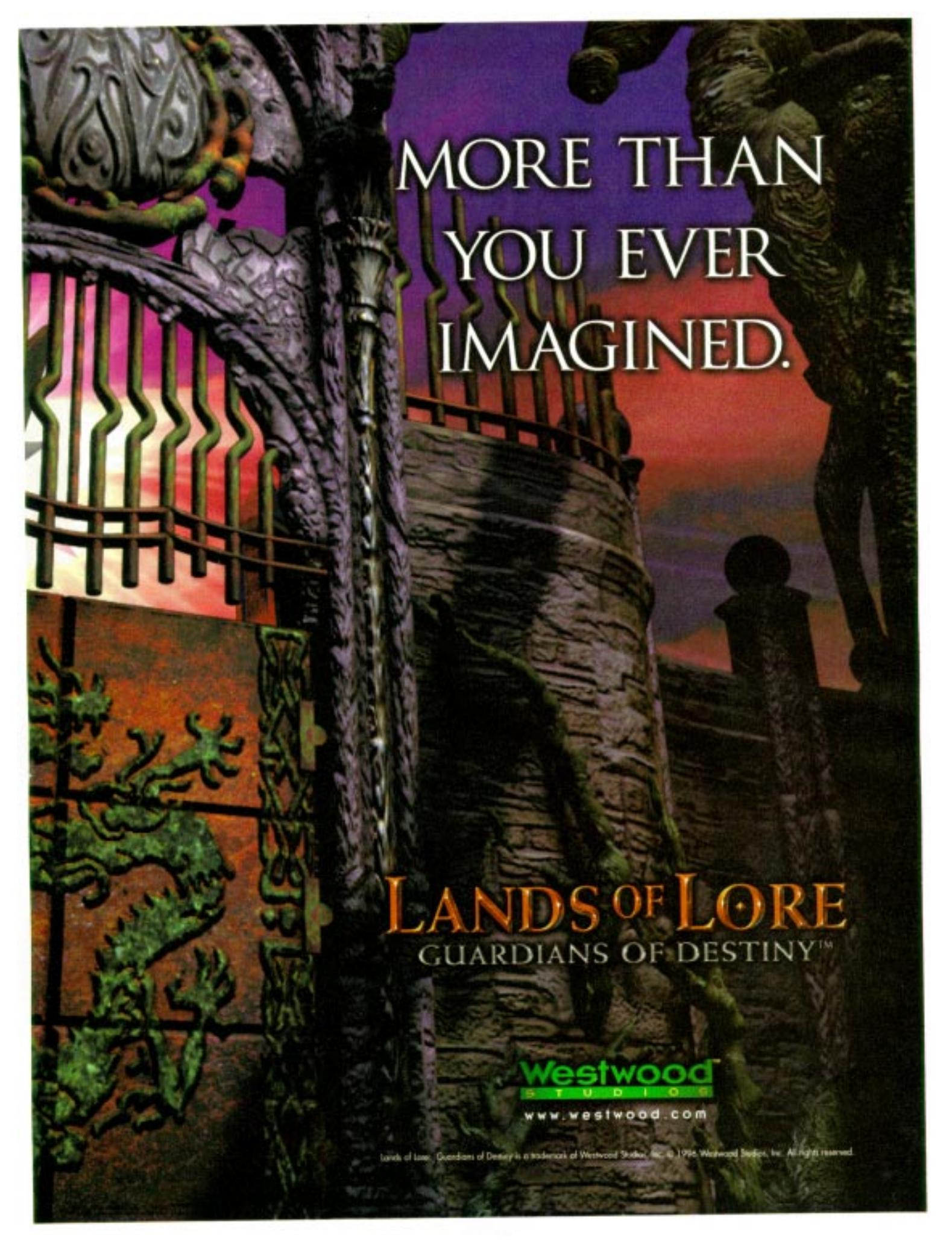
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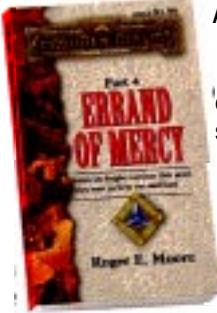
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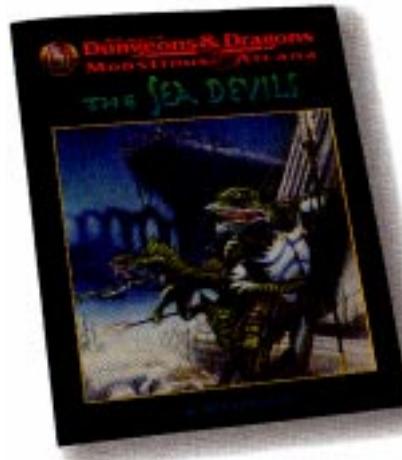
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Cover by David O. Miller

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Clack

Continued from page 120

pages and many hours. At press time no other Hero Plus products have been announced, making *Super-Mage* and *Champions: The New Millennium* the only Hero products published this year. (tal-sorian@aol.com; herogames@aol.com)

Notes from the field

Ever increasing its ratio of press releases to products, Gold Rush Games (Elk Grove, CA) has announced it will distribute Crunchy Frog/Nightshift Games, publisher of the *Hidden Invasion** and *Critter Commandos** games, among others. Gold Rush president Mark Arsenault said, "Add these to our recent acquisition of the Hero System* products from Iron Crown Enterprises, and you quickly realize we have quite a selection of products available." (GoldrushG@aol.com)

Rob Heinsoo, former *Feng Shui** and *Shadowfist** developer at Daedalus Entertainment (Seattle), has joined

Chaosium (Albany, CA) as editor/developer of the upcoming new Glorantha rpg and the Glorantha miniatures line. (See last issue's "Current Clack.") "It's a dream job for me," says Heinsoo. "I love Glorantha, and its had a big impact on my life." *Feng Shui** line editor John Tynes has also left Daedalus to run his own company, Pagan Publishing, full time. Pagan's long-awaited *Call of Cthulhu* modern-day Special Forces campaign, *Delta Green*, should be out now. (chaosium@aol.com; paganpub@aol.com)

The Duelist, the official *Magic: The Gathering** magazine, has had an almost complete staff turnover in the last six months. Now edited by Terry Melia, a longtime freelancer for sports trading card magazines, *Duelist* has sharply improved its appearance under a new art director, Shauna Wolf Narciso; increased its frequency to eight issues a year; and broadened its coverage of

other trading card games and computer games. New editor-in-chief Mark Rosewater, who creates each issue's popular *Magic* puzzles, recently produced a book of 25 new puzzles (Wizards of the Coast, \$13.95). (duelist@wizards.com)



Freelance writer Allen Varney currently does contract design work for a computer game company in his home town of Austin, Texas. Send news to APVarney@aol.com.

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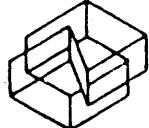
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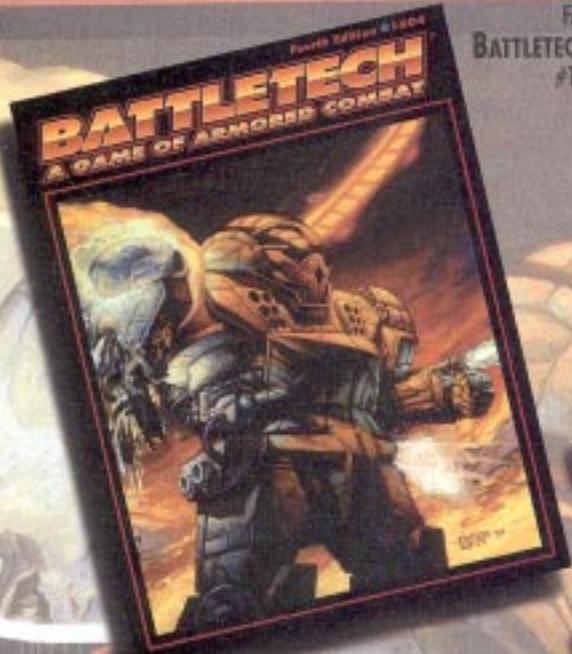
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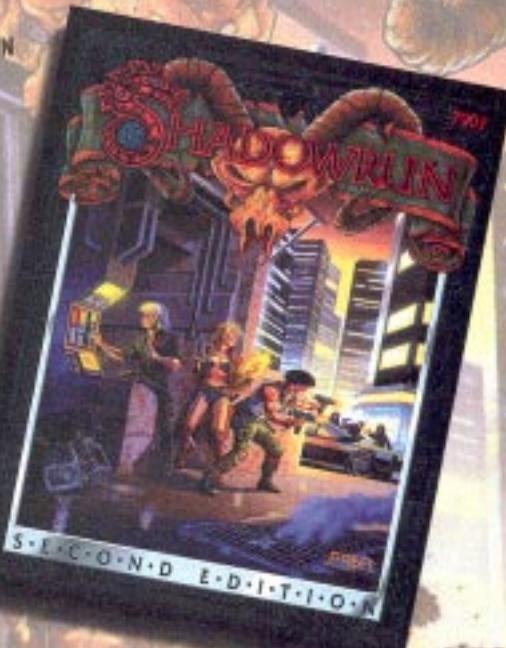
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The Current Clack

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Licensing takes the field

Since the earliest days of role-playing, licensing — the purchase of rights to turn a literary, movie, or TV property into a game — has figured prominently in the hobby. The impulse to license has risen and fallen in waves over the years, and now it's surging strongly again.

Chameleon Eclectic's *Babylon Project** RPG, based on the *Babylon 5* TV show, should be out now, as is R. Talsorian's *Bubblegum Crisis* RPG (based on the Japanese anime series). Also scheduled for Christmas release is Five Rings Publishing's *Red Alert** game, an expandable dice game based on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. The new *X-Files** and *BattleTech** trading card games have made big splashes. And there's more to come.

Last Unicorn Games, publisher of the *Aria** RPG and the *Heresy** card game, plans to produce a card game based on author Frank Herbert's *Dune* novels. *Dune* (1965) universally recognized as a science-fiction classic, describes a complex galactic power struggle over the desert planet Arrakis, sole source of the vital life-prolonging spice, melange. Avalon Hill produced an excellent *Dune** boardgame in 1979, with two uneven expansions in 1984 that tied in with an unfortunate film adaptation by David Lynch. No one has yet done a licensed role-playing adaptation, though Holistic Designs' new *Fading Suns** RPG takes inspiration from Herbert's work. Last Unicorn plans a *Dune* card game for this spring, but at press time the company's role-playing plans were unknown. (Contact: monomyth@aol.com)

New Millennium Entertainment, publisher of the *Conspiracy X** RPG and the unjustly neglected *Battlelords** card game, has contracted to produce an RPG based on the new *Starshield* novel series by Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman, authors of the *Dragonlance* novels and many others. The first book

in the series, *Sentinels*, appeared in November. New Millennium previews its game on the Web: www.starshield.com. (NMEGames@aol.com)

Expedient tactics: "Can't these companies invent their own ideas?" some may ask. Current market conditions make launching original, non-licensed games riskier than ever. Many distributors and retailers, burned by unwise speculation in last year's trading-card game boom, now lack funds (and often courage) to order unproven products. Any kind of name recognition helps overcome their resistance. Also, many licenses bring with them ready-made art portfolios of stills or illustrations, which can expedite production.

The latest licensing surge demonstrates how some small publishers remain ambitious in a hostile market. Past licenses have sometimes leveraged minor companies into major players. For instance, FASA Corporation, now a leading RPG publisher (the *BattleTech*, *Shadowrun**, and *Earthdawn** games), first sprang to prominence with a *Star Trek* RPG, and Iron Crown Enterprises has benefited vastly from its Tolkien license, now 14 years old and stronger than ever. Still, companies that form a licensing relationship sometimes prove incompatible, which is one reason why you don't see *Star Trek* supplements any more.

The great success story of licensed games remains West End's *Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game*: which so enhances the *Star Wars* films that licensor Lucasfilm now accepts West End's material as canonical additions to the SW universe. Very few licenses genuinely improve, rather than merely exploit, their sources. But with luck and talent this new wave may produce similar happy endings.

R. Talsorian/Hero "fuzion"

The *Bubblegum Crisis* RPG mentioned above introduces a new rules system, the *Fuzion** system (pronounced

"fusion"), that combines features of R. Talsorian Games' Interlock* system (in the *Cyberpunk 2020* and *Mekton Zeta* games) and Hero Games' Hero System* universal rules (basis for the *Champions** super-hero RPG). *Fuzion* will become the new system for all these games, in the wake of this summer's deal whereby R. Talsorian (Berkeley, CA) becomes the new publisher and distributor for Hero Games (Aptos, CA). (See "Current Clack," issue #231.)

"All Hero System and Interlock system characters can be easily used in *Fuzion*, and vice-versa; no elaborate conversion is necessary," says a press release. "Fuzion will also let you use all the power creation rules from the Hero System, so you can create any new power, gadget, or magical effect for *Fuzion*. *Fuzion* lets you use cyberware from the *Cyberpunk* game, or build mecha using the *Mekton Zeta* rules. All previous Hero System and Interlock products will work with *Fuzion*."

Hero System co-designer Steve Peterson says *Fuzion* is not a new edition of the Hero rules but a new game system compatible with them. "We will continue to support 4th Edition Hero System players by selling the 4th Edition rules through our Hero Plus division," which publishes paper game supplements in electronic form. "At this time, we're not planning to publish a 5th Edition." The first, and so far only, *Champions* product announced by Talsorian is a campaign book, *Champions: The New Millennium*.

Hero Plus has gotten off to a rocky start since its initial announcement this past spring ("Clack" issue #228). The debut product, *The Ultimate Super-Mage*, originally planned for February, finally appeared in September on two disks (\$25). Though they liked its content, some customers reported that printing the supplement required hundreds of

Continued on page 118

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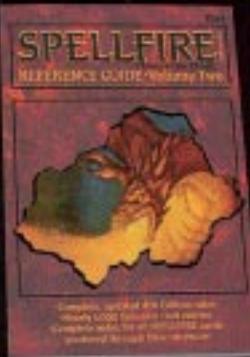
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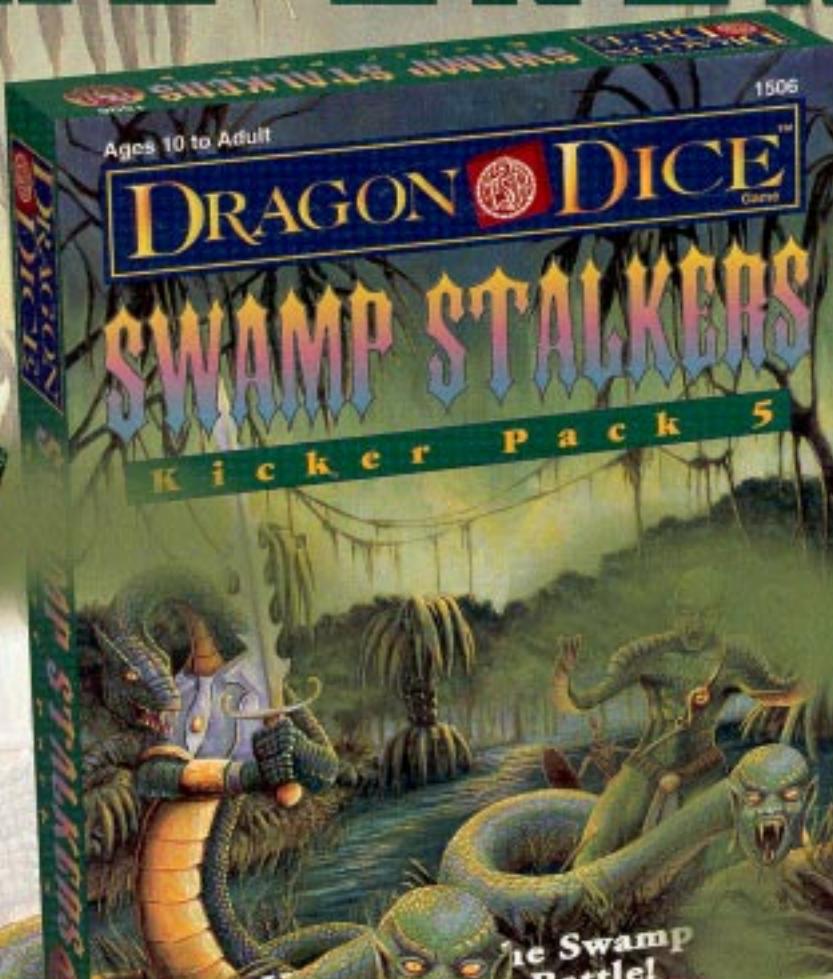
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